THE REED OF PAN

A. C. BENSON

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THE REED OF PAN

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FATHER PAYNE
THE GATE OF DEATH
THY ROD AND THY STAFF
WHERE NO FEAR WAS
ESCAPE, AND OTHER ESSAYS
WATERSPRINGS
THE UPTON LETTERS
FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW
ALONG THE ROAD
THE ORCHARD PAVILION
HUGH: Memoirs of a Brother
LIFE AND LETTERS OF MAGGIE BENSON

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THE REED OF PAN

ENGLISH RENDERINGS OF GREEK EPIGRAMS AND LYRICS

BY

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προτέρων μελέων ὀλίγη τις ἀπορρὼξ

PREFACE

THESE renderings of epigrams from the Greek Anthology and of a few lyric fragments were begun some months ago at the suggestion of a friend. My purpose has been simply this—to give a series of equivalents which should be essentially and unmistakably, so far as I could achieve it, English poems. I have kept as closely to the original meaning as the exigencies of rhyme and metre would permit ; but I have not denied myself some freedom of interpretation : I have allowed myself to expand a condensed thought or to bridge a swift transition. I do not claim that they are in any sense literal renderings, but rather an attempt to represent in English verse what I conceive the mood and progression of the original poem to be, somewhat on the lines of William Cory's well-known translation, "*They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead.*" But I have tried various experiments : to some I have given a slightly archaic flavour ; some of the lighter ones I have frankly modernised. It will be remembered that the epigrams themselves are of very various dates, and extend over a period of not less than thirteen hundred years.

Since I began my work, a volume of very graceful and accomplished verses, *Little Poems from the Greek*, by Mr. Walter Leaf, has made its appearance. These, however, are versions rather than paraphrases ; and their very fidelity to the exact phrasing of the originals, ingenious and apt as it is, does not permit Mr. Leaf to anglicise the poems completely, or to free them from the slight constraint which comes from rendering language rather than thought, and mode of expression rather than motive. Thus Mr. Leaf's versions do not read to me as if they were poems which would have originally been composed by an English writer, but rather, to use a musical metaphor, as though they were skilful modern settings of archaic and foreign airs.

The greater number of the epigrams which I have rendered will be found in Mr. Mackail's *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, for the simple reason that Mr. Mackail's selection has been made with such unerring taste and discrimination, that I could find very few epigrams of equal merit which he has not included. And I should like to add a few words of gratitude and admiration not only for Mr. Mackail's beautiful and suggestive introduction to the subject, but for the grace and dignity of his own prose renderings. I find it indeed difficult to express adequately how much I am indebted to his book.

A. C. B.

Magdalene College,
Cambridge.

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THE songs that I have gathered here
With all their radiance crystal-clear,
Their silvery gleam, their ruby glow,
Were sung by singers long ago;

The sun that is at noon too bright
To meet our faltering human sight,
Through sunset haze doth oft appear
More kind and visible and near.

So, though I veil in formal dress
Their inner ancient loveliness,
Yet they, in duller robe attired,
May be more soberly desired.

ABBREVIATIONS

A. = The Greek Anthology, known as the Palatine Anthology; the book and the number of the epigram are given.
Ap. Pl. = The Planudean Appendix to the Greek Anthology.
C.I.G. = Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.
Kaibel = Kaibel's Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus collecta.
Bergk = Bergk's Poetae Lyrici Graeci, 4th edition.

NOTE

It must be remembered that there is much uncertainty as to the date and indeed as to the identity of several of the authors of these epigrams. The ascriptions are traditional, many of the writers bear the same names, and it is difficult to differentiate their work. No biographical details exist about many of them; thus the dates assigned are often approximate or conjectural.

THE REED OF PAN

I

The Blackbird

(Marcus Argentarius, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 87)

BLACKBIRD, warbling loud and clear,
On the oak-tree's highest spray,
'Tis the tree thou hast to fear :—
Leave thy singing ; haste away !

Yes, the treacherous oak's thy foe ;
See, his foliage, branching high,
Screens the poisonous mistletoe,
Luring thee to eat and die.

Rather seek the friendly vine,
Shadow-rippled, ranging free,
Where the glimmering leaves entwine
Safer harbourage for thee.

There thou mayst securely rest,
There thy melodies prolong,
For the God, who loves her best,
Loves the singer and the song.

II

The Bookworm

(Evenus, 1st cent. B.C., A. ix. 251)

BLACK book-worm, who in envious rage
Dost tunnel through the written page,
Thy dumb and surly enterprise
To mar the wisdom of the wise ;
To prey concealed on sacred lore,
To filch the sweets of learning's store ;
How like to jealous hate thou art,
That burrows in the human heart ;
For ev'n the kindly Muse, that knows
No malice, hath her secret foes.
Avaunt then, atrabilious worm,
Writhe hence thy misbegotten form,
Lest the sweet sisterhood should guess
How much thou hat'st their comeliness.

III

Chanticleer

(Marcus Argentarius, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 286)

CHANTICLEER, you have ruined my sleep for the night !
I was dreaming of Pyrrha, my only delight,
And the radiant vision is fled.
Is this my reward, inconsiderate bird,
For making you lord of the egg-laying herd,
That your crowing would waken the dead ?

I swear by Serapis, her sceptre and shrine,
You shall harbour no more in this farmstead of mine,
To pester me early and late.
You shall go to the temple to-morrow at morn,
You shall lie on the altar, by which I have sworn,—
A victim, that sealed his own fate !

IV

Procne

(Pamphilus, 2nd cent B C , A ix 57)

POOR swallow, as thou glidest by,
Thou dost renew thy plaintive cry ;—
Is this thine only song ?
Dost thou remember the sad day
When Tereus stole thy heart away,
And did thee grievous wrong ?

V

The Cicala's Prayer

(Unknown, A. ix. 373)

SHEPHERDS, wherefore thus delight,
Cruel hearts,—to rend and slay
Me, the woodland-loving sprite,
Perched upon the dewy spray ?

I, the noontide nightingale,
Chirp my music, sharp and shrill,
In the shadow of the vale,
In the silence of the hill.

Thrush and ousel, thievish birds,
Rob your orchards ; I would scorn,
Like the starlings' clamorous herds,
To despoil the ripened corn.

Slay the harpies who devour
Fruit and wheat-crop ; 'tis their due.
Who would grudge me bed and bower,
And the crystal beads of dew ?

VI

The Grasshopper

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. vii. 195)

LITTLE minstrel, ply thy simple song,
So shall sleep beguile my fond desire ;
In the sunny cornland, all day long
Thou dost imitate the smitten lyre.

Play for me some melody of love,
Smite with restless feet thy tuneful wings,
Let thy voice my anxious cares remove,
Voice, that trembles as the trembling strings.

I will bring thee little gifts at dawn,
See, thy mouth with plenty shall be filled ;
Dandelion, gathered on the lawn,
Clear well-water from the pitcher spilled.

VII

The Locust's Grave

(Mnasalcas, 4th cent. B.C., A. vii. 194)

THIS tiny urn, with pious care bestowed
Within a crevice by the lonely road,
Holds the spent body and the silent wing
Of one small singer, never loth to sing.
Democritus, his locust—wilful sprite,
Silent and heedless through the hours of light ;
But when the twilight gathered cool and dim,
The cloister echoed to its vesper-hymn.

VIII

The Cicala

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 198)

UNDERNEATH this humble stone
Here I lie, my labours done.
Little howsoe'er it be,
'Tis enough to cover me.
'Twas Philaenis, friend to all,
Gave me seemly burial.

Yes, she loved me and my song,
All the pleasant summer long,
Loved the music that I made
On the thistle in the shade,
Punctual song at break of day,
When upon her bed she lay.

When I died, Philaenis gave
All I lacked, this tiny grave ;
Raised the little stone you see
To remind herself of me,
When the silence, all day long,
Waits for my remembered song.

IX

The Bee

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 404)

HOW sweet a juice the bee compels
The pillaged flowers perforce to yield!
How dainty fair the waxen cells
Which soon his garnered nectar shield!

He toils not as poor mortals toil,
Who dig and delve with patient spade,
With oxen to upturn the soil,
Or wield the sickle's curving blade.

Nought needs he but a little cup,
Wherein his gathered sweets to pour.
Hail, pretty vagrant! sip and sup,
And rifle all the summer's store.

X

The Mouse

(Ariston, 2nd cent. B.C., A. vi. 303)

IF for bread, brother mouse,
You have come to this house,
Run away ; I have little to spare !
There is nothing at all
In my cottage so small,
And even my cupboard is bare !

Somewhere else, if you please,
You may breakfast on cheese,
And a bunch of dried raisins, perhaps.
And supposing you find
The *cuisine* to your mind,
You can make a plain supper of scraps.

But my books ! if you dare
To come nibbling, I swear
'Tis too much ; it will shortly appear
That I won't have a mouse
Making free with my house ;
You'll be sorry you ever came here !

XI

The Secret Spring

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., Ap. Pl. 226)

NAY, drink not from the mantled pool ;—
The kine have stamped the marge to mire ;
'Tis neither clear, methinks, nor cool,
Nor aught that wayworn men desire.

Fare on a little farther still,
To yonder solitary pine ;
The heifers graze about the hill ;—
There stay those weary feet of thine ;

See, from the channelled rock on high
The bubbling streamlet leaps and flows,
'Tis clearer than the cloudless sky,
And colder than the Northern snows.

XII

Kings' Gardens

(Arabius, 6th cent. A.D., A. ix. 667)

LO, I am lovely with grove and arbour,
And vineyard-closes and waters free,
And over the rim of the sun-warmed harbour
Cometh the savour of wind and sea.

Joyous the gifts of the summer teeming,
The windswept waters, the kindly fields ;
The silver fish in the tense net gleaming,
The golden fruit that the orchard yields.

And they that wander by glade and alley
Are lulled to slumber at close of day,
When a sweet bird sings in the silent valley,
Or far-off mariners tune their lay.

XIII

A Roadside Hermes

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 227)

HERE, till sultry noonday pass,
Rest amid the meadow-grass ;
Let the breeze with cool caress
Charm away thy weariness.

Hark, the shrill cicalas cry !
While the winds that fitful sigh
Stir the tasselled pine aloft,
Soothing thee with murmur soft.

Thou shalt hear the pleasant tune
That the shepherds pipe at noon,
Shepherds by the fountain laid,
Underneath the plane-trees' shade.

Rest thee through the dewy night ;
Then to-morrow breast the height ;
Thou canst put thy trust in me,
Hermes, Lord of errantry.

XIV

The Pleasaunce

(Marianus, 6th cent. A.D., A. ix. 668)

HOW fair this space of garden-ground!
The grove, the grassy meads around,
The deep-embowered high-branching trees
O'er-rippled by the Western breeze.
Here is the sunny pleasaunce, set
With cowslip-cup and violet;
And fountains three within the grove
Make glad the shade that Naiads love.
The ancient river winds and brims
His channels, where the Dryad swims,
And in the fruitful orchard-ground,
Green olive-berries, sleek and round,
Drop fatness; and when suns are high,
The wrinkled raisin-clusters dry.
Here half the day the woodlark sings,
And crickets ply their whirring wings,
Till every thicket unawares
Thrills with sweet murmurs and soft airs.
My door stands open; stranger, come,
Be welcome; make my hearth thy home.

XV

The Torrent

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 277)

UNRULY torrent, why so fiercely rage
To stay the foot that goes on pilgrimage?
Drunken with rain, the teeming cloudland's store—
The gentle nymphs thy turbid streams abhor!
The sun shall parch thee, who can best discern
The lordly river and the knavish burn.

XVI

Love's Precinct

(Mnasalcas, 4th cent. B.C., A. ix. 333)

THIS is the place ; come stand awhile with me ;
How still the shore, how gently falls the sea !
Lo in its precinct, by the winding way,
The little shrine where lovers come to pray.
There lies the pool beneath the poplar shade,
Fed by the streamlet murmuring down the glade ;
'Tis clear as crystal, and beside the brink
The brown birds hover, and alight to drink.

XVII

Playing Fields

(Nicias, 3rd cent. B.C., Ap. Pl. 188)

THE winds about Cyllene sway
The restless forest far and wide ;
I guard the pleasant fields of play
Which nestle by the mountain-side.

The boys upon my altar set
Fresh hyacinth blooms, and garlands twined
Of marjoram and violet,
And what beseems the virgin mind.

XVIII

The Statue by the Sea

(Anyte, 4th cent. B.C., A. ix. 314)

BESIDE the windswept orchard-close I stand,
Here, where the road divides ; on either hand
Stretch seaward miles on miles of sullen sand.

Here is cool shadow, and a grassy seat ;
And all the while, the fountain at my feet
Pours forth its chilly waters, pure and sweet.

XIX

Summer Shade

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 71)

HIGH-BRANCHING oak, thy shadowy screen
Hangs, like a leafy web, between
The men who shelter at thy feet,
And noonday's sheer o'er-arching heat.

Leaf beyond leaf, in order set,
Build up the airy parapet,
The home of doves in summer eves,
The home of crickets, bowery leaves!

I stoop within the shade, and there,
Safe from the blinding wide-flung glare,
Lie well content; your shelter give,
And shield a toil-worn fugitive!

XX

The Well

(Unknown, A. ix. 374)

EVER-FLOWING, crystal-clear,
I, the weary traveller's well,
Pour my waters, gathered here
From the hillside and the dell.

Close-ranked laurels, glossy-green,
Have a noonday shelter made ;
Plane-trees lend a leafy screen ;
Coolness everywhere and shade.

Drink thy fill and take thine ease ;
Lo ! 'tis summer ; pass not by ;
In the shadow of the trees
Here awhile in quiet lie.

XXI

Simplex Munditiis

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vi. 226)

HERE is Clito's little cot ;
There his patch of garden-stuff,
Scrap of copse, and orchard-plot ;—
Little seems it, but enough !
Free from sorrow, free from fears,
Clito lived here eighty years.

XXII

The Old Shepherd

(Macedonius, 6th cent. A.D., A. vi. 73)

DAPHNIS, I that piped so rarely, I that guarded well the fold,
'Tis my trembling hand that fails me ; I am weary, I am old.
Here my well-worn crook I offer unto Pan, the shepherd's friend ;
Know ye, I am old and weary ; of my toil I make an end !
Yet I still can pipe it rarely, still my voice is clear and strong,
Very tremulous in body, nothing tremulous in song.
Only let no envious goatherd tell the wolves upon the hill
That my ancient strength is wasted, lest they do me grievous ill.

XXIII

Pan Pipes

(Cometas, 10th cent. A.D., A. ix. 586)

PAN, my belov'd, sit near me ; to the reeds
Grown musical, thy wreathèd lips be set ;
And hark, how Echo in the sunny meads
Remembers what thou wouldst not quite forget.

XXIV

Echo

(Satyrus, 2nd cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 153)

HOW oft doth Echo feed and fill
The silence of the shepherd's hill;
How tenderly her notes prolong
The sweetness of the linnet's song!

XXV

The Pursuit

(Theocritus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. ix. 338)

WHERE leaves are piled in rustling heaps,
His task completed, Daphnis sleeps ;
In glen and glade his snaring-net
Between its ashen stakes is set.

But Pan hath tracked him to his lair,
And he who binds his shaggy hair
With ivy garlands—see, how fleet
The coming of their eager feet !

Wake, Daphnis, wake ! Arise and flee,
If thou art minded to be free.
Oh, thou canst sleep another day,
Shake off thy slumbers ; haste away !

XXVI

Al Fresco

(Nicaenetus, 3rd cent. B.C., Athenaeus xv. 673 B.)

PHILOTHERUS, it were pity
Not to range the meadows now,
But to linger in the city
When the West winds gently blow.

By the willow-bed reclining—
More we need not ;—you and I,
Osiers for our couches twining,
Never softer shall we lie.

Wine to warm us, song to cheer us ;—
Touch the lyre with skilful hand,
Singing praises, Philotherus,
To the Lady of our Land.

XXVII

A Pastoral

(Glaucus, 2nd cent. A.D., A. ix. 341)

Pan. HO, nymphs, I ask of you
If Daphnis rested here;
Come, tell me quick and true,
As it shall soon appear.
The goats he drives are all his joy;
Say, have you seen the shepherd-boy?

Nymphs. Yes, Piper Pan, 'tis true
That Daphnis rested here;
And left a word for you,
As it shall soon appear.
On yonder poplar's bark so white,
His message did he plain indite.

Pan. What saith the writing?—"*Know*
I Daphnis, passing here,
To Psophis straight shall go,
As it shall soon appear."
The message thus I clearly spell;
I thank ye, nymphs, and cry farewell.

XXVIII

The Secret Music

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 244)

SAY, little Faun, doth this thy pipe unbidden
Make secret music in thy listening ear ?
Say, dost thou bend to trace the sweet notes hidden,—
Unearthly sounds, which mortals may not hear ?

Lo, he was silent then, intently smiling,
Mutely withholding the unuttered word ;
So rare a harmony his soul beguiling
That for delight he neither spake nor stirred !

'Twas not the sudden stillness that constrained him,
When the sweet melody at length had rest ;
Only from word and movement he refrained him,
Loved well the song, but loved the silence best.

XXIX

The Trio

(Theocritus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. xi. 433)

PRITHEE, lift thy flute, and wake
Music sweet for me and thee,
And thereto my lyre shall make
Its accordant harmony.

Daphnis then shall pipe in turn ;
Meetly be the cadence planned !
By the cavern fringed with fern
Will we minstrels take our stand.

Pan is used to slumber there,
And such music we will make,
He shall hear us from his lair ;
Pan will soon be wide awake !

XXX

Nymphs of the Spring

(Hermocreon, 2nd cent. B.C., A. ix. 327)

NYMPHS of the cool translucent spring,
To whom Hermocreon's offering
Is giv'n with lavish hand,
Here in these crystal eddies dance,
With twinkling feet retire, advance,
Upon the silver sand.

XXXI

Forest Music

(Plato, 4th cent. B.C., but probably not authentic, A. ix. 823)

SILENT stands the forest and the wooded height,
Silent are the streamlets dripping down the rock,
Hushed the busy murmur of the noonday bright,
Hushed the mingled bleating of the wandering flock.

Pan himself makes music on the pipe he loves,
See his soft lips gliding o'er the close-ranked reeds!
Nymphs that range the mountains, Nymphs that haunt the groves,
Weave the dance around him in the grassy meads.

XXXII

The Vine and the Goat

(Evenus, 1st cent. B.C., A. ix. 75)

WHAT though thou crop my branches to the root,
Yet will I bear one cluster more of fruit ;—
One cluster more, that shall for wine suffice
To make libation at thy sacrifice.

XXXIII

Wintry Weather

(Antipater of Sidon, 1st cent. B.C., A. xi. 37)

AUTUMN returns, and with the waning year,
Amid the starry host surpassing clear,
In heaven's high field Arcturus doth appear.

Now the ripe grapes the flashing sickles dread,
And, as the wild winds bluster overhead,
Men thatch with rushes byre and cattle-shed.

Thou hast no fleece-lined cloak, nor tunic warm ;
Soon thou wilt shiver, muttering many a charm
Against the cold star that hath wrought thine harm.

XXXIV

Outward Bound

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., A. x. 14)

CALM is the sea, a purple plain ;
No tempest frets the whitening wave ;
Landward no more the billows strain,
On shattering reefs to roar and rave ;
No more the chill spray scattered wide
Drops helpless back to meet the tide.

The West wind breathes, the swallow cries,
And wheels about her moulded nest.
Now, trusty mariners, arise,
Renew the old adventurous quest !
Whether to Afric sands ye ply,
Or rock-fringed bays of Sicily.

Yet, ere ye go, one reverence pay ;—
Fortune on timely reverence waits ;—
Here by the altar kneel and pray,
Within the sanctuary gates.
The God your homely gift approves—
Mullet or sea-perch—such he loves !

XXXV

Bon Voyage

(Antipater of Sidon, 1st cent. B.C., A. x. 2)

NOW the ship once more may glide
Through the waves with even keel,
Now no more 'gainst fretting tide
Shall the shuddering canvas reel;

Now the marten 'neath the eaves
Hangs her little plastered nest,
While the soft unfolding leaves
Ripple, by the breeze caressed.

Coil the dripping rope, to dry
In the sunshine overhead;
Hoist the buried anchor high
From the harbour's oozy bed.

Stretch the forestay; trim the sail;
I, Priapus, Bromius' son,
Cheerly from the headland hail;
Be the voyage well begun!

XXXVI

On Deck

(Theognis, 6th cent. B.C., l. 1197, Bergk)

I HEAR a brown bird sing,
As off the shore we run ;
The bird that tells of spring,
And ploughing-time begun.

And oh, it makes me sad
To think that others hold
The pleasant fields I had,
So gay in green and gold.

My mules are mine no more ;—
Brown bird, forbear to sing—
Oh, I am wearied sore
Of all my seafaring.

XXXVII

The Skiff

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. ix. 107)

THEY say that I'm the smallest boat
Of all sea-going craft afloat ;
They say I may not dare to glide,
Like stately galleons, o'er the tide.

I care not,—little tho' I be,
All ships are equal out at sea ;
Fortune doth weal and woe dispense,
And size makes little difference !

Some put their trust in rudder-gear,
And others in the time of year.
I trust in God, and not in man ;
He'll keep me safe, if any can.

XXXVIII

The Chariot-Race

(Anyte, 4th cent. B.C., A. vi. 312)

GOAT, who would know you, with your head
Beribboned and begarlanded ?
The children harness you, and make
You gay and gentle for their sake ;

They imitate the chariot-race,
And you forgo your wonted pace ;
They call you many a merry name,
And you not least enjoy the game.

XXXIX

Companions

(Anyte, 4th cent. B.C., A. ix. 745)

THE sacred he-goat comes this way ;
Lives there a prouder goat to-day ?
His eyes so sinister and wild
Are gentle now, as though he smiled !
And all because a little maid
Her hand upon his beard hath laid,
And clasping close his matted hair,
Trips on beside him, light as air.

XL

A Child's Song

(Traditional, Carmina Popularia, Bergk, 21)

TORTOISE, what are you doing out of your bed ?
Child, I am weaving wool and Milesian thread !
Tortoise, where in the world can your little boy be ?
Child, he jumped from his white horse into the sea !

XLI

A Cruise

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 546)

A MATTRESS of straw by the gunwale for me,
And a screen of coarse canvas that rattles with spray ;
And a fire among stones, with the smoke blowing free,
And an iron pot boiling and bubbling away ;
My table a plank with a sail laid across,
And the cabin-boy bringing the meat to be dressed ;
And a crusty old yarn, and a penny to toss ;—
Such a rare rough-and-tumble is what I love best.

XLII

In Vino Veritas

(Posidippus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 134)

ATTIC flagon, from thy lip
Let the potent vintage drip ;
Every draught the seal and sign
Of the mysteries divine.
Sage of wisdom, hold thy peace !
Bard of truth, thy prating cease !
Thee we worship, Thee we greet,
Love most sorrowful, most sweet.

XLIII

A Wine-Jug

(Unknown, A. v. 135)

BIG-BELLIED jug, whose sturdy rims
The ruddy beaded liquor brims,
Narrow your neck, and wide your waist,
Your handle most securely placed ;
To you and all your tribe belong
Friendship and laughter, love and song.

The liquor flows from lip to lip,
But breaks the rule of comradeship !
When I am empty, you are full ;
What makes me merry, leaves you dull.

XLIV

The Music of the Spheres

(Marcus Argentarius, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 270)

OH well I love the ordered dance,
The circling forms that glide and glance,
Like golden stars that overhead
Their mazy measures seem to tread.

Oh well I love my hair to crown
With flowers that drop their petals down ;
To touch the lyre, and hear the string
Utter its dainty jargoning.

For thus methinks I most aspire
To imitate the heavenly choir ;
Where Orpheus' harp looks shining down,
Not far from Ariadne's crown.

XLV

Summer Snow

(Simonides, 6th cent. B.C., Athenaeus iii. 125 C.)

FROM Thracian wolds, with icy blast,
High up in heaven the Northwind passed;
Till all Olympus far below
Lay covered with a robe of snow;

Poor mortals shivered, thinly-clad;
But wiser men had patience, glad
Such wealth of coolness to impound,—
And laid it living underground.

Give thanks for summer snow; and blend
Fit portion with my cup; a friend
Who serves a lukewarm draught to sip,
Knows little of good fellowship.

XLVI

Memnon [1]

(Asclepiodotus, 2nd cent. A.D., C.I.G. 4747)

MEMNON lives, and cries aloud
Where the mystic torches blaze,
Where the awestruck listening crowd
Bow their heads in deep amaze ;

Where beyond the parched hill-sides
Libyan summits grimly frown ;
Where the speeding Nile divides
Thebes from Thebes, that high-walled town.

Once the slayer, now the slain,
Great Achilles speaks no more.
Silent lies the Trojan plain,
Silent the Thessalian shore.

[1] Memnon was slain by Achilles at Troy. The lines above are the inscription on one of the so-called statues of Memnon in the valley of the Nile, near Thebes. The statue was believed to speak at dawn.

XLVII

Marsyas [1]

(Archias, 2nd cent. A.D., A. vii. 696)

HANG there, upon the rugged pine,
Where bitter wind and raging storm,
For that foul insolence of thine,
May lash and rend thy beast-like form.
Hang there, of joy and sense bereft,
The victim of vain-glorious strife;
Far better, if thou ne'er hadst left
Celaenae, and thy rustic life!
The nymphs lament thy cruel death;
They weep, remembering all thine ills;
For sweet as honey was the breath
Of thy wild flute on Phrygian hills.

[1] Marsyas was a Satyr, who contended with Apollo in a musical contest; and being defeated, was flayed alive by the god.

XLVIII

The Doom of Pride

(Alcaeus, 3rd cent. B.C., Ap. Pl. 8)

THROUGH Phrygian valleys, half the day,
Nought heeding, thou wert wont to stray,
And down the woodlands sing ;
And oh how sweet the music, freed
By lip and finger from blown reed
Or deftly-smitten string !

'Tis hush'd, that concert of sweet sound,
Thy piteous hands are straitly bound,
And thou art scant of breath.
Poor shepherd, 'tis thine hour of pain ;
For he that strives with God, shall gain
No victory but death.

XLIX

The Empty Casket

(Macedonius, 6th cent. A.D., A. x. 71)

PANDORA'S box ! [1] I lift the lid ;
Yes, there she lies ; her face is hid ;
I laugh—she shrinks aside in shame,
But she, poor soul, is not to blame.

I blame ye rather, wandering fires,
Unuttered fancies, fond desires,
Heavenward your joyous wings career ;
Ye settle anywhere but here !

Well, we have missed the way, it seems.
Between our unsubstantial dreams
And solid nearer happiness :—
The riddle is not hard to guess !
The casket's empty, I behold ;
I am not young—Pandora's old !

[1] Pandora, according to the legend, was the first created woman, given by Zeus in marriage to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. Pandora had a casket containing all the blessings of the gods, which would have been preserved for the human race if Pandora had not opened the casket, when all the winged blessings escaped.

L

Common and Unclean

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. xii. 43)

HOW I detest the poetry about which people talk,
And how I loathe a public road, where anyone may walk!
I hate a general favourite; and any mortal thing
I'd rather do than slake my thirst from a frequented spring.
Perhaps I am peculiar, but I really cannot bear
To use what's public property, which other men may share.

LI

Exit Brown

(Lucilius, 1st cent. A.D., A. xi. 133)

SO Brown, most prolific of poets, is dead!
I must warn the departed that Brown's on his way,
With an armful of manuscripts, read and unread—
And to make matters worse—he is coming to stay.

He has left the most careful instructions, has Brown.
His remains to be published? No, quite the reverse.
Twelve guitars to be burnt—they will follow him down,—
And twenty-six volumes of manuscript verse.

What a desperate mess! There are bards, it is true,
Who enjoy their own poetry only too well!
But what is a wretched bystander to do,
When Brown is declaiming his verses in Hell?

LII

A Lawsuit

(Nicarchus, 1st cent. A.D., A. xi. 251)

TOM and Bill had gone to law ;—
Such a sight you never saw !
Tom was deaf, and so was Bill,
But the judge was deafer still.

Tom, recounting all he'd spent,
Said, " He owes me five months' rent."
Bill replied, with smiling scorn,
" 'Tis at night I grind my corn."

Then the judge, serene and bland,
Raised a deprecating hand ;—
" Why dispute with one another ?
After all she is your mother."

LIII

A General

(Archilochus, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 58, Bergk)

I WOULD not have my general be
An ample man, who straddles wide,
And shaves himself too carefully,
All periwigged and dandified.

But small and sturdy, and with legs
Not bandy, but a little bow;
Valiant in fight, he neither begs
For mercy, nor doth mercy show.

LIV

The Cynic

(Lucian, 2nd cent. A.D., A. xi. 410)

A STURDY Cynic, staff in hand,
The veriest vagrant in the land,
With long and shaggy beard,
Called at my door and begged a crust ;—
He timed it rarely ; he had just
At dinner-time appeared.

He sate him down, that holy man ;
A plate of radishes began
Our homely meal to-day ;
Then crying " He that loves the right
Must be no slave to appetite,"
He waved the dish away.

But when a bowl of savoury meat,
With sauce and garnish all complete,
Was served,—intent and grave,
He helped himself to half the mess,
And added, " Perfect righteousness
Is not the belly's slave."

LV

The Stone of Ajax

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., A. ix. 204)

I AM the stone which Ajax flung—
Go read the tale by Homer sung—
He poised and hurled me ; with the blow
He laid the mighty Hector low ;
And I that dealt so shrewd a thrust,
Lie all unhonoured in the dust,
Blistered and black, uncomely grown,
To fame and memory unknown.

Now heedless folk would heave me hence
To serve their base convenience ;
Would put my ancient pride in thrall,
To pave a court or mend a wall ;—
Nay, rather let the kindly earth
Who lent me substance, gave me birth,
In dust and darkness wrap me round,
And hold me sleeping underground.

LVI

The Tomb of Ajax

(Unknown, A. ix. 116)

THERE stands, in sea-girt Salamis,
A tomb beside the restless wave ;
Pass by in solemn silence ; this
Is Ajax' grave !

The shield above, that to and fro
Rocks in the breeze that sweeps the shore,
Ay, 'tis the shield that long ago
Achilles bore !

And still, they say, at set of sun,
A sad voice cries within the shrine,
" Awake, O child of Telamon,
The shield is thine." [1]

[1] The shield of Achilles was awarded as a prize of valour to Odysseus, and Ajax, who had counted on winning it, killed himself. When Odysseus was shipwrecked, the shield was washed ashore at Salamis, the home of Ajax.

LVII

The Answer

(Unknown, A. ix. 177)

A PHRYGIAN once, in Ajax' shrine,
The buried hero would deride,
And shrilly mouthing Homer's line,
"*Ajax no more endured,*" he cried.

Then suddenly, from underground
A hollow voice made answer there,
"*He did endure*"—whereat, a sound
Of cries and whispers filled the air.

Then did that hapless Phrygian man
Repent his deed in woe and dread,
And forth in frenzied anguish ran,
For terror of the angry dead.

LVIII

The Shield

(Mnasalcas, 4th cent. B.C., A. vi. 264)

I AM Alexander's [1] shield,
Borne by him on many a field ;
Phoebus of the golden hair
Hath me now, an offering rare.

I am dinted, old, and dim ;
Worn my boss and worn my rim ;
But to eyes that see, I shine
With thy valour, master mine.

When his arm I did enfold,
I was bold, for he was bold.
Never was I known to yield,
I am Alexander's shield.

[1] The son of Phylleus.

LIX

The Singing Stone

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 279)

I AM named *The Singing Stone* ;
When thou passest by alone,
Then remember how I came
To deserve so fair a fame.

When yon bastion high was set
Firm with plinth and parapet,
Phoebus plied a builder's trade,
And a stone in order laid.

Phoebus threw his lyre aside ;
And my substance, sanctified
By the lyre across me flung,
Gave me what I lacked—a tongue !

Grasp a pebble ; touch my side
Howso gently—'tis my pride !
Thou shalt hear a wondrous thing,
Hear how sweet a stone can sing !

LX

The Boar

(Paulus Silentiarius, 6th cent. A.D., A. vi. 168)

XENOPHILUS hath slain the boar
That spoiled the vines, the trees uptore,
That fought with sheep-dogs in the meads,
And lurked among the waving reeds.

Oh, yestermorn he left his lair,
With gleaming tusk and bristling hair ;
Xenophilus with might and main
Hurled his sharp spear, nor hurled in vain.

The beech-tree, by the covert side,
Received the mighty monster's hide ;
And Pan shall bless the huntsman's store ;—
This shall he have who slew the boar !

LXI

The Eternal Distinction

(Theaetetus, 6th cent. A.D., A. vii. 444)

'TWAS on a winter night,
Late wassail had they kept ;
Till guest and bondsman, squire and knight,
About the hall-place slept.

Then from a fallen brand
A treacherous flame outbroke,
And creeping fires on every hand
Filled the great hall with smoke.

Base thrall and honour'd friend
To evil death did pass ;—
And all that night who did attend
The Lord Antagoras.

They on the morrow, laid
Together, great and small,
One pile of mouldering ashes made ;
One grave received them all.

The mourner knoweth not
Their nurture or their name ;—
But death shall unto each allot
His glory or his shame.

LXII

The Quiver

(Gaetulicus, 1st cent. A.D., A. vi. 331)

ALCON, who saw his precious boy entwined
By a fell serpent,—'twas a loathly thing—
Straight from his shoulder did his bow unbind,
And loosed an arrow swiftly from the string,

Nor missed the monster ; for the arrow, sped
By fury, through the gaping gorge he drave,
A hairsbreadth o'er the child's unwitting head,
And thus from grievous hap his babe did save.

Wherefore he set within this sacred grove
His carven quiver with its polished lip,
A thankful offering, and a sign to prove
Alike good fortune and good marksmanship.

LXIII

The Partridge

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., A. vii. 204)

MY poor little partridge is dead ;
I caught him, when hardly full-grown,
On the hill ; but I gave him instead
A wickerwork cage of his own.
How I loved all his pretty fond ways !
When he wakened, how nimbly he'd run
To meet the dawn's earliest rays,
And to ruffle his wings in the sun.
But the cat made a pounce, and the head
She secured, and the innocent brains ;
Yet I rescued the body ; she fled,
Without very much for her pains !
O earth, lie thou heavy, not light
On the limbs so discreetly interred ;
Lest the cat, like a ghoul of the night,
Carry off the remains of my bird.

LXIV

The Old Race-Horse

(Archias, 2nd cent. A.D., A. ix. 20)

ONCE by Alpheus, fitly famed
For course and contest of swift steeds,
And victor twice was I acclaimed
In fair Castalia's flowery meads.

At Nemea crowned, at Corinth crowned,
To me, in my glad prime, 'twas given
For strength and grace to be renowned,
And fleeter than the winds of Heaven.

But now, grown old, I plod all day
To turn the stone that grinds the corn ;
With blows men urge me, and repay
My victories with lavish scorn.

LXV

Ruined Cities

(Alpheus, 2nd cent. A.D., A. ix. 101)

HOW rarely now may we behold
The cities of the men of old :
And those, methinks, that yet remain
Are little mounds about the plain.

I lately passed Mycenae's gate,
But all was dark and desolate ;
It seemed as trackless, bare, and rude,
As any mountain solitude.

The careless goatherds point the way,
And I have heard a grandsire say,
" This was that city, rich in gold,
That Cyclops built in days of old."

LXVI

Troy

(Agathias 6th cent. A.D., A. ix. 153)

WHERE are thy massy walls to-day,
Thy temples reared in days of old,
The oxen thou wert wont to slay,
Thy store of arms, thy hoarded gold ?

Where are the golden gods, who stood
So proudly in the carven shrines ?
Lost is thine ancient hardihood,
The valour of thy serried lines.

The flashing sword, the leaping flame
Have slain thy sons, and brought thee low ;
Yet nought can shake thy builded fame,
Nor any glory higher go !

LXVII

Her Gates are Desolate

(Unknown, A. vii. 723)

PROUD Lacedaemon, in thy day
None could disturb thee, nor dismay
Thy old unconquered might ;
But now thou bear'st the tyrant's yoke,
And o'er Eurotas seest the smoke
Of camp-fires in the night ! [1]

The trees are down that lent thee shade,
The birds that sweetest music made
Amid the woodland deep,
Now nest and wail on the bare ground ;
And wolves that listen hear no sound
Of shepherds or of sheep.

[1] Philopoemen of the Achaean League dismantled Sparta in 189 B.C.

LXVIII

The Dead City[1]

(Antipater of Sidon, 2nd cent. B.C., A. ix. 151)

O CITY of palace and portal,
High-crowned and engirdled with towers,
Enriched with remembrance immortal,
And shrines of celestial powers;
The halls where thy gallants came thronging,
The streets where thy multitudes trode,
Who tells of thy rending and wronging?
Make answer, my God!

What ravishing fate hath deflowered thee?
What swords have dismembered thy bones?
Fierce horde after horde hath devoured thee;
Thy walls are but mouldering stones;
The sad sea alone and her daughters
Lament thee, and bid thee repose,
As the halcyons borne on the waters,
That wail for thy woes.

[1] Corinth was destroyed by Lucius Mummius in 146 B.C.

LXIX

The Seven Wonders

(Antipater of Sidon, 2nd cent. B.C., A. ix. 58)

I HAVE seen the wall of Babylon
Sheer as a crag ; and to and fro
The chariots passing by thereon ;
And where Alpheus runneth slow,
I have seen the statue of Zeus stand,
And the hanging gardens terraced high,
And Phoebus' image, brazen hand
Uplifted, and the ships thereby ;
I have seen the mighty tomb wherein
Mausolus, ancient Lord, doth sleep :
And where the desert sands begin,
The pyramids so huge and steep.
All these I have seen ; but when I came
Where Dian's shrine sky-neighbouring shone,
I marvelled ; *this*, methought, *doth shame*
All else the sun's eye looks upon.

LXX

The Nautilus

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., Athenaeus, vii. 318)

CYPRIS, I am vowed to thee,
I, the shell to sailors dear,
Wonder of the Western sea,
By Selene offered here.
Breathed there a propitious gale,
Far I wandered to the South,
Hoisting up the mimic sail
From my silver-corded mouth.
If there fell a gentle calm,
Then I rowed with dainty speed,
Plying either veinèd arm ;
See, my name affirms my deed ! [1]
In the blue Ionian sea,
There by wondering eyes beguiled,
Wearied, I was glad to be
Plaything of a gentle child.
Here no more the loud winds rave,
Here I may securely rest ;
Heedless if the charmèd wave
Slumbers, while the halcyons nest.

[1] Nautilus means "sailor."

Praise the gentle heart that willed
I should here be meetly laid ;
Smyrna loves her ; she is skilled
As befits a prudent maid.

LXXI

Sea Wonders

(Antipater of Sidon, 2nd cent. B.C., A. vi. 223)

HERMONAX, as he drew to land
His net with teeming fishes filled,
Found somewhat lying in the sand
Which all his mind with wonder thrilled :

The fragment of a monstrous limb
From some sea-wandering polyp torn,
Eight fathom long, all foul and dim
With sea-scurf, by the surge upborne.

So he in pious hope his prize
To Ino and Palaemon gave,
The Ocean-loving Deities,
This wonder of the Ocean wave.

LXXII

The Quail

(Alcman, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 25, Bergk)

WHERE did I find this measure quaint ?
Hid in the meadow-grass, I heard
The quail renew her wistful plaint,
And learned my music from the bird !

LXXIII

A Girl's Life

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 297)

A GIRL ere she become a wife
Has little of the joy of life;
Young men, you are not so unkind
So much as lamentably blind;
I wonder that you do not see
How hard a maiden's lot may be!

You've troops of friends to hear your cares,
And all your little love-affairs;
You've games to play, and in the street
Can talk to anyone you meet,
Or to the gardens you can go
And see the pictured portico.

But we, in stuffy chambers mewed,
Have far too much of solitude;
With little light and little air,
We yield ourselves to dull despair;
I wonder that you do not see
How hard a maiden's lot may be!

LXXIV

Obbligato

(Pratinas, 5th cent. B.C., Fr. 1, l. 6–14, Bergk)

GIVE thou first place to him that sings ;
The flute is but the serf of song ;
Only to drowsy revellings
And wanton wiles doth it belong.

Spurn the base minstrel whose shrill notes
Outpace the master-singer's voice ;
The song upon the silence floats,
And bids the listening air rejoice.

Shall sleight of hand, shall wooden toy
Make the diviner measure mute ?
Quick, let the leaping flame destroy
The spittle-wasting babbling flute !

LXXV

The Goal of Art[1]

(Parrhasius, 4th cent. B.C., Athenaeus xii. 543 C.)

I SAY it: let the world deride
Or wonder; but thus much I know;—
This art of mine hath glorified
Completeness; none can further go.
This then I say—no upstart soul,
No braggart, but Parrhasius, I!—
This hand hath touched the eternal goal
Of art; and none shall pass it by.

[1] Parrhasius was the famous painter, the rival of Zeuxis.

LXXVI

Art and Life

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 136)

TIMOMACHUS, with patient skill,
Essayed to paint the two-fold will
That did Medea move.
How deep, how deadly was the strife!
The frenzy of a slighted wife,
A mother's anxious love.
Long days he toiled, to body forth
The passion, now to fiercest wrath,
To pity now inclined;
Thou seest the picture; each is here;
The threat that struggles with the tear,
Vengeance with love combined.
Ay, 'tis enough to show the intent!
He dared not paint the dire event
That closed Medea's wrongs;
'Twas stained with blood, that monstrous strife;
But to portray it, unto life
And not to art belongs.

LXXVII

Ladas

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 54)

THIS is the statue Myron made ;
Ladas, the fleetest runner known,
By swiftest rival undismayed,
Stands living in the lifeless stone.

He treads on air ; he marks the goal
With deep-drawn breath and watchful eye ;
He hath no tremor in his soul,
Nor any doubt of victory.

LXXVIII

The Death of Plato [1]

(Leontius, 6th cent. A.D., A. vii. 571)

WHEN Orpheus died, the Muse lived on,
And touched anew the silent flute ;
But now that Plato's self is gone,
The songs, the very strings are mute.
Sweet sounds, that breathed from ancient lands,
Obeyed his bidding, his control ;
They streamed enraptured from his hands,
Or dwelt serene within his soul.

[1] A contemporary musician.

LXXIX

The Power of Music

(Simonides, 6th cent. B.C., Fr. 46, Bergk)

MUSIC giveth men to drink
Of the joy of coming things,
Hovering o'er the secret brink
Of all sweet imaginings.

Yet she doth not only dwell
In the swiftly-passing hour ;
Nay, but hath a far-off spell,
Hath a backward-glancing power.

She doth reap and garner up
Fruits of strange experience,
These she mingles in her cup
With the dews of innocence.

What hath been and what shall be !—
Linger not, nor stay thine hand,
Music, till I hear and see,
And a little understand.

LXXX

Hypatia [1]

(Palladas, 5th cent. A.D., A. ix. 400)

DIVINELY fair, divinely wise,
Hypatia, when these faltering eyes
Behold thee, when thy speech I hear,
I worship thee with holy fear.

I gaze, beyond the cares of earth,
On those pure heavens that gave thee birth,
And see above the zenith flame
The star [2] that bears thy virgin name.

Thy thoughts on heavenly wisdom bent
Are wisdom's prize and ornament ;
Thou shinest, and thy light is dear
To mortals who must linger here.

[1] The heroine of Kingsley's novel.
[2] The constellation Virgo.

LXXXI

On a Picture of Philoctetes

(Julianus, Prefect of Egypt, 6th cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 113)

'TIS Philoctetes! He doth know
The darkest depths of mortal woe;
And all who gaze on him may see
The tokens of his misery.
His wasted limbs are rough and bare,
And all o'ergrown with shaggy hair;
His tangled locks are harsh of hue,
Now parched by sun, now soaked with dew;
How monstrous do the bones appear
Beneath the skin so shrunk and sere;
No tears o'erbrim his fevered eye,
The very source of tears is dry!
Night after sleepless night he bore
The throbbing of the envenomed sore,
And day by sullen day renewed
The torment of his solitude.

LXXXII

Orpheus

(Antipater of Sidon, 2nd cent. B.C., A. vii. 8)

ORPHEUS, no more shalt thou compel
With thy divine melodious skill
The oaks upon the rocky fell,
The deer that wander where they will.

The blustering wind, the driving snow
Uncharmed their sullen course shall keep ;
How canst thou hold the ebb and flow
Of ocean, who thyself dost sleep ?

Why should we chide the untimely grave,
Or mourn the last expiring breath,
When ev'n Immortals cannot save
Their sons from unrelenting death ?

LXXXIII

Homer

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 303)

WHO hath not heard the mighty voice
Of Homer, and the tale of Troy ?
And who that hears doth not rejoice ?—
A tale of tears begetteth joy !

Ay, that Cimmerian folk, which dwells
In darkness, in the land of night,
Have heard the tale that Homer tells,
And taste the very joy of fight.

Atlas himself, whose shoulders wide
The vaulted firmament sustain,
Knows well how Hector fought and died,
And how Odysseus came again.

LXXXIV

A Battle-Song

(Tyrtaeus, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 15, Bergk)

MARCH ye, sons of warriors bold,
March, remembering ye are born
Of the land that dares to hold
Other chivalry in scorn.

Grasp the buckler, clasp the spear,
Seek the hottest of the fray;
Life to hoard in craven fear,
Such was never Sparta's way.

LXXXV

The Sinner

(Alcman, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 87, Bergk)

THE feast was spread, the wine was poured ;
But in the midst of all the cheer,
And ill at ease beside the board,
The sinner, in his hour of fear,

Took up the oft-repeated thought,
Propp'd weary arms on weary knees,
Eyes dully staring, seeing nought,
But like to one who thinks he sees.

LXXXVI

Go Gaily

(Antipater of Sidon, 2nd cent. B.C., A. xi. 23)

STAR-GAZERS tell me I shall die in youth,
And I—I care not if they tell the truth.
Death closes all ; and if this fleeting breath
Soon fail, so much the quicker road to death !
Come, crown the bowl ! At least I'll gaily go,
Not totter whimpering to the shades below.
Like those old knights, I'll take the open road,
Not creep and slink where pilgrim feet have trode.

LXXXVII

A Reproach

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. xii. 148)

OH yes, I know my board is bare,
That I have neither pride nor pelf;
All hearts hold secrets; oh beware,
Tell no man's secret to himself!
Friend, thou dost vex me! Was there need
To feign a fault, where fault was none?
This is the most unkindly deed
Of many deeds unkindly done.

LXXXVIII

Letters

(Palladas, 5th cent. A.D., A. ix. 401)

NATURE, tending human-kind,
And the friendship-loving mind,
Did with busy zeal invent
Many a pretty instrument,
Which dissevered hearts should teach
To draw nearer, each to each,
Hearts, whom sundering seas divide
With their rude estranging tide.
Pen and paper, little things,
Yet can lend the spirit wings,
Joining over sea and land
Hand outstretched to outstretched hand.

LXXXIX

Moonrise

(Sappho, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 3 and 4, Bergk)

THE moon high-hung in the hollow night
Resistless pours her silver tide ;
Swift, swift the stars withdraw their light,
And their diminished glories hide.

And where cool streams through reed-beds slip,
The breeze through the orchard alley stirs,
And slumber well-nigh seems to drip
From the dark arms of dusky firs.

XC

The Starry Heaven

(Ptolemaeus, 2nd cent. A.D., A. ix. 577)

I KNOW that I am mortal clay,
Frail creature of a fleeting day ;
But when at midnight I behold
The stars, within their courses rolled,

No more on earth my feet I set,
But things terrestrial I forget.
I soar aloft to Jove's high seat,
And take my fill of heavenly meat.

XCI

The Making of Man

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 472)

LO, out of the infinite ages thou cam'st to the daylight, O man ;
And into the infinite darkness thy bodiless spirit shall fall ;
For the space of thy life with its sorrow and laughter is brief as a span,
And the range of thy dreaming is wide as the time of thy doing is small.
'Tis heavy, thy burden of sorrow ; 'tis fleeting, thine hour of delight ;
And oft shalt thou say in thy sadness that sorrow is darker than death.
Yet thy spirit shall soar to the morning, and ride on the wings of the night,
Though frail is thy flesh, and as brittle thy bone, and as scanty thy breath.
For lo, as the worm on the vine, that the sap and the sweetness devours,
Leaves nought but a skeleton frail as a web that a spider might spin,

Even so shall thy sickness undo thee, through weary
and merciless hours,
And make of thy beauty a shadow, and mar thee
without and within.
Then know what thy strength shall suffice for, ere
thou to thy darkness depart ;
In the hour of thy passion refrain thee ; the joys
that beguile thee discern,
Remembering this, in the springtime, when joy is
awake in thy heart,
That out of the dust thou wert moulded, and unto
the dust shalt return.

XCII

Virtue

(Simonides, 6th cent. B.C., Fr. 58, Bergk)

THEY say that virtue long ago
Among the mountains dwelt alone,
And heard the stormy clarions blow
Among the crags of splintered stone.

But now in every humble shrine
She sits, unseen by human eyes,
Save his who knows the quest divine,
And is in doing greatly wise ;

Not loud in word, but true in deed,
Who, grieving for his own disgrace,
Still lives to serve another's need ;—
He may behold her face to face.

XCIII

Fortune's Field

(Unknown, A. ix. 74)

I WAS the field, one bygone day,
Of noble Achaemenides,
Now poor Menippus I obey ;
But I shall pass from those to these ;

And each in turn, or small or great,
Holds me, and thinks to hold me still.
Nay, I am no man's land ; but fate
Allots me at her own sweet will.

XCIV

Nemesis

(Thymocles, 2nd cent A.D., A. xii. 32)

DOST thou remember how I said,
Forecasting woe, a reverent word—
" The fairest hour is soonest sped,
And swifter than the swiftest bird ? "—
See, the fair hour hath passed thee by,
And all thy blooms dishonoured lie !

XCV

Beware

(Archilochus, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 54, Bergk)

BEWARE, rash boy, beware !
See, o'er the sullen deeps,
Though silent broods the air,
A secret shudder creeps.
About yon summits sheer
The gathering vapours wind ;
I scent the breath of fear
With sorrow close behind.

XCVI

Worship

(Sappho, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 78, Bergk)

SWEET child, with garlands be thy tresses bound,
Twine marjoram with woodbine, spray with spray;
The gods love those who come with chaplets crowned,
From those ungarlanded they turn away.

XCVII

Lavabo [1]

(Unknown, A. xiv. 71)

CLEANSE thy hands, and enter in,
Guileless tongue and honest heart!
Purify thy soul from sin;
God discerns thee as thou art.

Water, for thy cleansing spilt,
Shall suffice thee, ere thou pray;
But the stubborn sinner's guilt
Ocean cannot wash away.

[1] This is thought to be a Delphic Oracle.

XCVIII

Lead Thou Me On

(Cleanthes, 3rd cent. B.C., Epict. Enchir. lii. 91)

LEAD on, my God, and Thou, my Destiny,
Wherever my appointed course may be ;
Unflinching may I follow ; if my will
Be faint and craven, I must follow still.

XCIX

Prayers

(Julius Polyaenus, 1st cent A.D., A. ix. 7)

LORD Almighty, Thou dost see
  All that man in secret fears,
And the thanks of men set free
  Beat upon Thy sated ears.

In thy temple-precinct fair—
  All about 'tis holy ground—
Grant fulfilment of my prayer,
  Let my patient hope be crowned.

Grant me, on my native soil
  To abide henceforth in peace.
Make an end of all my toil,
  Bid my weary wanderings cease.

C

Homeward Bound

(Unknown, A. ix. 49)

FORTUNE and Hope, a long farewell!
Now am I bound for home.
I gain the port, I break your spell;
Make mock of those who come.

CI

The Shadow of Life

(Aesopus, 5th cent. A.D., A. x. 123)

HARD to escape, yet harder to endure,
Life's a sore sickness—yet is death the cure ?
The sea, the earth—what visions of delight !
The stars, the greater and the lesser light !
All else is fear and sorrow ; if we find
Good hap, the shadow follows close behind.

CII

The Fool of Fortune

(Unknown, A. ix. 530)

NOT of goodwill doth Fortune shower
On thee her gifts ; come, take thy crown ;
She only loves to show her power
Of raising up and putting down.

CIII

The Last Hour

(Julius Polyaenus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 8)

HOPE doth betray us, making fair
Not what life is, but what it seems ;
And thy last hour dissolves in air
Thy bright designs, thy busy dreams.

CIV

The Last Fear

(Palladas, 5th cent. A.D., A. x. 59)

OH, 'tis sore to wait on death,
Ever drawing anxious breath ;
Weep not o'er the quiet dead,
Death being done, there's nought to dread.

CV

A Cheerful Giver

(Strato, 2nd cent. A.D., A. xii. 235)

IF Love and Beauty die, wherefore not give
That freely, which so short a time doth live?
But if they die not, wherefore not divide
Gifts which, for all thy giving, shall abide?

CVI

Destiny

(Palladas, 5th cent. A.D., A. x. 73)

IF the blind force that bears thee, seem to bear
Thee where thou wouldest, let it work its will.
But if to wrath or sorrow or despair
Thou yieldest, it shall bear thee onward still.

CVII

A Prayer

(Unknown, A. x. 108)

LORD GOD, on us Thy goodness show,
Whether we pray for it or no;
But if for evil gifts we pray,
Lord, in Thy mercy, say us nay.

CVIII

Courage

(Archilochus, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 66, Bergk)

ENDURE, my soul, endure,
Though sore beset by grief ;
Thou needst not look for cure,
Or respite, or relief.

But hold thy ground—to-day
No time for craven fears !
Seek thou the hottest fray,
And breast the bristling spears.

If victor, let thy pride
No paltry honours claim ;
If vanquished, never hide
Thy head at home in shame.

But take of good and woe
Whate'er thy fortune brings,
And face the ebb and flow
That governs human things.

CIX

The Thorn

(Unknown, A. xi. 53)

A LITTLE while the roses smile,
They grow in beauty, morn by morn ;
But ah, too soon the rose of June
Is drifted petal and bare thorn !

CX

Trophies[1]

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. ix. 322)

NOT these the spoils of battle-fields,
Trophies of mighty men laid low!
But shining helms, undinted shields,
And swords that never dealt a blow.
Not such are fitting ornament
For banquet-halls and palaces;—
Nay, blood-bespattered, sweat-besprent,
They lend no grace to hours of ease!
My brow is damp with dews of shame,
My heart beats hotly in my breast,
For see, the trophies I acclaim,
The best-esteemed and goodliest,
Dinted and scarred by thrust and blow,
The tokens of relentless fight,
Stained with the blood of friend and foe,
In such as these I take delight!

[1] Ares speaks.

CXI

The Blessing of Peace

(Bacchylides, 5th cent. B.C., Fr. 13, Bergk)

PEACE giveth men their hearts' desire,
Good cheer, and songs of rare device ;
High burns the sacred altar-fire,
With savour sweet of sacrifice.
And striplings turn to sport and game,
To flutes, and revels worth the name.

Within the helmet on the wall
Her web the busy spider weaves ;
The spear stands idle in the hall,
And rust o'ergrows the shining greaves ;
No more the brazen clarions blow,
Or high-borne trumpets forward go.

Sweet sleep, that maketh glad the heart,
No more is reft from weary eyes ;
And everywhere through street and mart
Go forth the jocund companies ;
And hark, the children, how they sing
In their light-hearted carolling !

CXII

Artemis

(Mnasalcas, 4th cent. B.C., A. vi. 268)

THIS is thine image, huntress-queen.
Cleonymus hath set thee here
Upraised, the high-branched oaks between,
To guard his herds of dappled deer.
How fleet thou comest, cheering on
Thy panting hounds with hue and cry ;
The winds are up ; the wild woods groan
And bluster, as thou speedest by.

CXIII

Artemis Unarmed

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 253)

MISTRESS of the woodland deep,
Thou hast doffed thy wonted gear ;
Idle doth thy quiver sleep,
Idle hangs the barbèd spear ;
Idle is the clasp of gold
That confines thy tunic's fold.

[*She speaks*]

" Yes, thou dost behold the face
That I turn to those who pray ;
Weapons that befit the chase
Ill befit my festal day,
When I bless the kneeling crowd
Through the rising incense-cloud."

CXIV

Pan

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 258)

THE fane that bears Dictynna's name,
So thick with reek of altar-flame,
Enshrines me, hoofed and hornèd Pan,
Alike the foe and friend of man.
A goat-skin vest, with shaggy hair,
Protects me from the nipping air ;
I wield a cudgel carved of oak,
And dinted deep with many a stroke ;
I, when the wintry storm-winds rave,
Deep-lurking in the dusky cave,
With restless watchful eyes survey
The sombre wood, the hillside grey.

CXV

God and Man

(Archilochus, 7th cent. B.C., Fr. 87, 88, Bergk)

The Man. OF heaven and earth Thou art the Lord,
Thou art Almighty, and dost see
Whatever deed, whatever word
Doth violence to Heaven and Thee.

The very beasts that prowl intent
On rapine, bow to Thy command;
Thou car'st for all things; punishment
And guerdon lie within Thy hand.

Zeus. Thou seest yon mountain-fastness grey?
There at my ease I oft-times sit,
To watch thee at thy puny fray,
And think no little scorn of it.

CXVI

Hermes

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 256)

YOU ask me why I guard the fold
High on the bleak and windy wold ;
It was not willingly I came ;
Archelochus must bear the blame.
I hate the lonely hills that rise
And hold mute converse with the skies ;
On country roads I love to walk
With vagrant men, and hear them talk.
Archelochus, the herdsman rude,
Loves laughter less than solitude ;
He set me here, and made of me
The moping hermit that you see.

CXVII

The Garden-God

(Tymnes, 2nd cent. B.C., Ap. Pl. 237)

The God. "I HUSTLE thieves, and make them run,
And I would hustle Cronos' son!"

The Man. "For shame! Hast thou no godly fear?
The garden-lettuces will hear!"

The God. "I care not; if the greens have heard,
Then let them tremble. 'Tis my word."

CXVIII

The Guardian of the Hive

(Nicias, 3rd cent. B.C., Ap. Pl. 189)

I LEFT the vales of Thessaly,—
Peristratus had need of me ;
And here my rustic rounds I make
To guard his hives for friendship's sake.

If thou art bent on thievish gain,
Know that I smite, nor smite in vain ;—
Nor think to fly ; no mortal man
Can stride as swingingly as Pan.

CXIX

Love Garlanded

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 202)

I AM not Aphrodite's son,
The flower-crowned God of Lebanon ;—
He loves the banquet and the sound
Of laughter, as the wine goes round.

But I was born in woodlands wild ;
Plain, country-bred, a simple child,
In crowded haunts I linger not,
But guard the lonely garden-plot ;—

Lonely, but fruitful ; I despise
Exotic blooms and spiceries ;
The seasons bless my frugal store,
And crown my locks with chaplets four.

CXX

A Statue of Hermes

(Unknown, Ap. Pl. 254)

WAYFARING men, who pass me by,
Have heaped about my marble feet
A pile of votive stones ; but I
Care little for the folk I greet.

I heed not ; I have scarce a smile
For this their trivial offering ;
I only say 'tis yet a mile
Before they reach the goatherds' spring.

CXXI

Safe Conduct

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., A. x. 17)

LORD of the Harbour, remember and hearken ;
Guard Archelaus in perilous seas.
Let not the flying wrack gather and darken,
Send a calm tide and a favouring breeze.

Lord of the Headland, with prayers unavailing
Grant us not vainly thy grace to implore.
Guard thou the convoy that soon shall be sailing ;
Ships that are bound to the Pythian shore.

Singers, the servants and sons of Apollo,
Ye are his care who obey his behest ;
Fair be your fortune ; up anchor, and follow,
Cheerily follow the winds of the West.

CXXII

Apta Marito

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vi. 281)

MOTHER of God, whom none dare name,
Who dost on Dindymus appear,
Or Phrygian uplands marred with flame,—
Thy suppliant hear.
Silene hath a daughter sweet ;
Grant that she gain a goodly spouse ;
A child no longer, she is meet
For marriage-vows.
She with a glad and willing mind
Oft to thy temple would repair,
And all for love of thee unbind
Her maiden hair.

CXXIII

The Pilgrim

(Antiphilus, 1st cent. A.D., A. vi. 199)

DIAN of the crossways, thou,
Take this offering from my brow.
'Tis of toilsome days the gage,
'Tis my hat of pilgrimage.
Thou my mistress, thou my pride,
Hast preserved me, far and wide.

Take it ; 'tis a little thing,
Pledge of weary wayfaring.
Let no greedy traveller's guile
Snatch my tribute—that were vile !
It should bring him plenteous ill,
Little things are sacred still !

CXXIV

The Last Voyage

(Julius Polyaenus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 9)

OFT I prayed for weather fair,
And as oft thou heard'st my prayer ;
Swift as thought my bark ran through
Lazy-rippled lakes of blue.

This last voyage that I take,
Father, for thy mercy's sake,
Grant me peace and quiet weather ;
Thou and I shall sail together !

Life grows cold ; of slumber fain,
Homeward hastening, let me gain
What shall ease my spirit's yearning,
Dust to silent dust returning.

CXXV

My Dog

(Macedonius, 6th cent. A.D., A. vi. 176)

TO Pan and to the Dryads here
I dedicate my hunting-spear,
My dog, the bag that holds my store ;
I am too poor to offer more !

Nay, but my dog I cannot spare !
He must return my crusts to share,
My daily rambles to attend,
My little comrade and my friend.

CXXVI

Timely Fruits

(Philippus, 2nd cent. A.D., A. vi. 102)

A PEAR russet-coated, more orange than brown,
Figs wrinkled and ripe, and a handful of grapes,
A sweet-smelling quince with a coat of fine down,
And a nut from its sheathing that nearly escapes,
A cucumber smooth, half-embedded in leaves,
And golden-robed olives, the ripest and best,
All this to Priapus, who drives away thieves,
Brings Lamon the gardener; and prays to be blest.

CXXVII

The Frog

(Plato(?), 4th cent. B.C., A. vi. 43)

SOME traveller, who had drunk his fill,
And rested here amid the grass,
With grateful heart and right goodwill,
Set up this frog of moulded brass.

Moist minstrel, lover of the rain,
Who serves the nymphs that haunt the dell,
Who chants his solitary strain,
And sits within the springing well!

Long had the traveller vainly sought
The draught he longed for. Then the thing
Upraised its hollow voice, and led
Him thankful to the timely spring.

CXXVIII

Who Givest All

(Unknown, A. vi. 42)

ALCIMENES, that ancient man,
Though poor and humble, ne'er forgot
To offer little gifts to Pan ;—
Spring water in an earthen pot,

A fig, an apple,—nothing more ;—
And standing, made his lowly prayer :—
" Thou giv'st me from thy plenteous store
All that my trees and seedlings bear.

So take this water from the spring.
The fruits that thou hast made to thrive ;
Make not too close a reckoning,
But give me more than I can give."

CXXIX

Warriors' Gifts

(Mnasalcas, 4th cent. B.C., A. vi. 9)

HERE at thy shrine my bended bow,
Lord Phoebus, gladly I deliver ;
And for thy mercies, I bestow,
Worn with great use, my ample quiver.

But not my arrows ;—they are sped !
In hearts of men I did implant them ;
The dreadful gifts, 'tis soothly said,
That warriors give to those that want them.

CXXX

Called Back

(Unknown, Kaibel, 802)

PAN, kindly sire, the leafy forest's king,
Lord of the Nymphs who pour the woodland spring,
Master and chief of minstrelsy divine,
This doth thy servant offer at thy shrine.

Fevered I lay, my spirit well-nigh fled,
My weeping children gathered round my bed ;
It was no dream, no vision of the night,
But thou thyself, in all thy sovereign might
Made visible, didst grant the gracious boon ;
These eyes beheld thee ; 'twas the hour of noon.

CXXXI

Small Things

(Perses, 4th cent. B.C., A. ix. 334)

I AM a god of low estate,
Of little boons and humble things;
And if thou seek for nothing great,
Meet recompense the morrow brings.

Whate'er a son of toil may claim,
And my humility afford,
I grant it:—never ask my name;
Of little things I am the lord.

CXXXII

In the Underworld

(Praxilla, 5th cent. B.C., Fr. 2, Bergk)

THE fairest things I leave behind
Are daylight, and the purple bars
Of sunset, and the summer wind,
And moonrise, and the gathered stars ;
And what the terraced orchard bears,
Ripe cucumbers and mellow pears.

CXXXIII

The Mysteries

(Crinagoras, 1st cent. B.C., A. xi. 42)

THOUGH at home thou dost abide,
Never faring far or wide,
Never tempting wind or tide,

Yet would this thy heart delight,
To behold the mystic rite
Of Demeter's festal night.

Thus thou shalt thy joys increase :
Living, thou shalt find release ;
Dying, thou shalt rest in peace.

CXXXIV

The Sailors' Offering

(Philippus, 2nd cent. A.D., A. vi. 251)

LORD PHOEBUS, who dost hold and keep
Leucas, the headland sheer and steep,
By wandering shipmen far descried
Across the blue Ionian tide ;
Receive from sailors storm-bound here,
Meet portion of their humble cheer,
A country vintage offered up
Before thee, in a country cup ;
No finest wheat-flour, but instead
A kneaded cake of barley bread,
An earthen lamp that gurgling sips
Oil from a flask with dribbling lips,
Whose faltering light, when day is done,
Glimmers an hour, and soon is gone.
Be gracious ; grant a favouring gale,
That forth to Actium we may sail.

CXXXV

Love Asleep

(Plato, 4th cent. B.C., Ap. Pl. 209)

IN the shadow of the grove,
When the summer sun was high,
There we saw the God of Love
Like a rosy apple lie.

He had put his bow away,
And his oft-replenished quiver
He had hanged upon a spray ;—
Would it there might hang for ever !

There he lay and dreamed of love,
Rosy to the finger-tips,
And the bees around, above,
Shed their honey on his lips.

CXXXVI

Cupid Asleep

(Statyllius Flaccus, Ap. Pl. 211)

THOU sleepest sound, O baneful boy,
And carest not, nor wonderest why
Poor solitary hearts, whose joy
Thou hast made vain, should sleepless lie.

Thou sleepest sound, and breathest soft ;
Thy burning brands no longer glow ;
Thy fiery arrows thou hast doff'd,
And silent lies the twanging bow.

Poor victims ! what so gentle seems
More irresistibly beguiles ;
I tremble ; for I fear his dreams
More deeply than his waking wiles.

CXXXVII

Fiery Darts

(Philodemus, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 124)

SUMMER lingers, and the rose
Doth not yet her sweets disclose,
And the vine that climbs apace
Wears not yet her cluster'd grace.
But the Loves, that ne'er forget,
See, their feathered darts they whet ;
While beneath the shrouding ash
Smouldering fires begin to flash.
What can this rebellion be ?
'Tis thy work, Lysidice !
Fly, poor lovers, from the string
Ere the myriad darts take wing.
Fly, and dream not of returning :
I foresee a mighty burning !

CXXXVIII

Cupid's Bow

(Anacreontic 31, Bergk ; date uncertain)

ONCE upon the midnight deep,
When the stars their courses wheel,
And the Bear descends the steep,
Close upon Boötes' heel :
When the race of mortal men
Sleep in peace, their labour o'er,
All was silent ; it was then
Came a tapping at my door.
" Ho, who knocks so late ? " I cried,
" Come to break my dreams of joy ? "
When a faltering voice replied,
" Fear not—I am but a boy ;
I am hungry, I am wet,
I have wandered all the day ;
Now 'tis dark,—the moon hath set,
And I cannot find the way."
As he cried, my pity came
For the child that strayed so far ;
So I set my lamp aflame,
And the door I did unbar.
Then I saw 'twas even so ;
' Twas a baby boy indeed !

On his back he bore a bow,
And to serve his childish need,
Dainty feathered darts, a score ;
But the child, all soil'd with mire,
Gently to my hearth I bore,
Set him dripping by the fire ;
Took in mine his little palms,
How they shivered, lying there !
Warmed and chafed his slender arms,
Wrung the raindrops from his hair.
But so soon as he was warm,
" Come," he said, " and let us try
If my bowstring suffered harm
Underneath the rainy sky."
Straight the tiny bow he bent,
Oh, but little darts have wings !
To my heart the arrow went,
Stung me, as the gadfly stings.
Laughed the rascal, soft and low,
" Come, old friend," he cried, " be calm !
Scatheless is my trusty bow ;—
'Tis thy heart hath taken harm."

CXXXIX

The Song

(Philodemus, 1st cent. B.C., A. ix. 570)

MAIDEN, whose hands are as smooth and as soft
as the wax of the bees,
Maiden, whose eyes are as clear and as deep as the
eyes of the Muse,
Sing in thy fresh young voice, which is sweet as in
summer the breeze,
Songs that are sweet, yet are sweet with the sorrow
that joy renews.

[She sings]

I must suffer grievous wrong,
Dying not, but sleeping long,
All alone, with piteous moan,
On my narrow couch of stone.

Yes, 'tis the song that I love, and the joy that is
born of pain ;
Sing me the song, dear maiden ; ah, sing me the
song again.

CXL

The Wound

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. xii. 134)

HE was wounded, it must be confessed ;
But we did not know how, when, or where ;
He was stricken, our roistering guest ;—
What a sigh, my companions, was there !

The cup for the third time he sipped,
When see, from his tresses unbound,
The garland disorderly slipped,
The roses were strewn on the ground.

He is right in the furnace, poor youth !
It is not a mere pious belief !
We are two of a trade, that's the truth,
And a thief's the best judge of a thief !

CXLI

Love's Pilgrim

(Paulus Silentiarius, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 301)

O WINGÈD Love, if thou shouldst flee
Farther than farthest Meroe,
I would take wings and follow thee.

Or wouldst thou meet on heights serene
The Dawn in all her silver sheen,
I'd traverse the long leagues between.

No need to range so far to-day!
Belovèd, at thy shrine I pray,
And there my votive gifts I lay.

Sea-treasures, from his deepest cave
Which Ocean for thy joyance gave,
Washed to thy feet by wind and wave;

Ay, 'twas the Queen of Love who bade
The gift be thine; for, O sweet maid,
Thee, in thy myriad charms arrayed,

When in amazement she espied,
"Oh, I am vanquished now," she cried;
"I here repent me of my pride!"

CXLII

Nec Odi Nec Amo

(Theognis, 6th cent. B.C., l. 1091 Bergk)

I KNOW not—'tis a sorry state ;
I may not love ; I cannot hate.
No vows, no tears your heart have moved.
You will not let yourself be loved ;
You make a jest of all my pain,
And yet I cannot hate again.
For, look you, it were hard to hate
What seems so fair and delicate ;
And yet methinks 'tis harder still
To love a maid against her will.

CXLIII

A Portrait

(Erinna, 7th cent. B.C., A. vi. 352)

THIS is her portrait ; limned with skill
Of subtle hand and loving eye ;
Prometheus, there be craftsmen still
Who share thine ancient mastery !

Could but the deft designer give
Those parted lips th' expected word,
Then Agatharchis' self would live,
Dear when but seen, yet dearer heard.

CXLIV

Writ in Water

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 8)

HOLY, all-embracing Night,
Lamp with mute and watchful light,
We invoked your aid to prove
Plighted troth and mutual love ;
When our vows were sanctified,
You stood witness ; none beside.

Then, with many a kiss, he swore
He would leave me nevermore ;
Then I vow'd, with heaving breath,
I would love him true till death.
You, and none beside you, heard
Every sigh and every word.

Now he says his vows were writ,—
Says, and takes no shame of it—
Writ, as winds in water trace
Words that they as soon efface.
Lamp, thou seest him where he lies,
Mirrored in another's eyes.

CXLV

Winds and Roses

(Unknown, A. v. 83, 84)

WOULD that I were a summer wind,
That thou, through noonday sunshine going,
Mightst bare thy fragrant breast, and find
Me close beside thee, gently blowing.

Would that I were a damask rose,
Thou shouldst espy me, and espying,
Shouldst gather me, and clasp me close
Within thy snow-white bosom lying.

CXLVI

Black but Comely

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 210)

YES, it was so! Didyme
Waved the rose she held at me;
It was only yesterday;
Yet she bore my heart away!
Now I gaze, and my desire
Melts like wax before the fire.
Say she hath a dusky air,
Black her eyes and black her hair,
She is very fair to me,
Black but comely—that may be!
Coals are black; but when they burn,
Into flowers of fire they turn.

CXLVII

The Stream Aflame

(Marianus, 6th cent. A.D., A. ix. 627)

LOVE, reclining in the plane-tree's shade,
Fain had slept, but ere he fell asleep,
Called the wayward nymphs that round him played,
Handed them his torch to guard and keep.

Then a nymph said softly, "Ere he wake,
Quick, my sisters, quench these fatal fires!
Be the torch extinguished, we shall slake
Heart-consuming passions, hot desires."

But the sprinkled water, lightly thrown,
Caught the flame and lit the amorous tide;
Soon the wayward nymphs, more reckless grown,
Flung the fiery waters far and wide.

CXLVIII

In Vain I Fly

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 212)

MURMUR of Love ever rising and falling,
Beats and resounds in my echoing ears ;
Twilight and dawn, ye are deaf to my calling,
Lost in a sweet sudden passion of tears.

Magic of Love, so insistent to woo me,
Deep in my heart lies your image to-day ;
Ah, wingèd Loves, that so hotly pursue me,
Have you no wings that would bear you away ?

CXLIX

The Garland

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 147)

HELIODORA, sweet and fair,
For your wavy fragrant hair
See, these eager hands of mine
Twine and twine and intertwine
Flowers, whose petals shall be shed
All about your curly head.

Here narcissus shall be set
Next the milk-white violet ;
Myrtle-blossom shall be blent
With the crocus, sweet of scent ;
Laughing lilies, dewy roses,
Such as blush in lovers' posies,
Hyacinths as red as wine :—
Thus I twine and intertwine
Garlands for your fragrant hair,
Heliodora, sweet and fair.

CL

The Chase

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. xii. 102)

ALL day the huntsman tracks the hare
That speeds across the upland lawn,
Or follows to her mountain lair
The footprints of the flying fawn ;

He wearies of the icy rain ;—
But if one say, " Here, take thy prize ;
By friendly hands for thee 'tis slain,"
He turns, and leaves it where it lies.

The loves that fly, the loves that woo !
These are my pleasure, these my pain.
The love that flies me I pursue,
The love that woos me I disdain.

CLI

Love by Moonlight

(Philodemus, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 123)

MOON, hornèd moon, that o'er the night
Dost pour thy soft and silver light,
Through carven lattice gently shed
About my lady's golden head,
Weave aureoles for her shining hair,
And bless the joys that lovers share.
A lover's joy, a lover's kiss—
Thou art immortal—grudge not this,
For thou thyself hast wooed, and won
The love of thy Endymion.

CLII

Seas Perilous

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 190)

BITTER is the barren wave,
Tossed and torn by every breeze;
Restless are the gusts that rave
O'er the foam of wintry seas;
Chased by winds and waves forlorn,
Rudderless my bark is borne.

Love's as restless and unkind;
Vain delight and jealous fear
Drive me like the ruthless wind,
Smite me like the billows drear.
Land of dread! yet would that I
Might your ravening rocks descry.[1]

[1] The reference is to the *Odyssey*, bk. xii, where Odysseus prefers the rocks of Scylla with their known terrors to the fiercer perils of Charybdis.

CLIII

Eventide

(Macedonius, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 233)

"TO-MORROW I will see thee." "Ah, who knows?—
For every hour thy slothful dalliance grows.
Thou giv'st thy gifts to others—but to me?—
Thou dost but spurn my loyal constancy!"
"At evening, then!" "Nay, wrinkled, haggard-eyed,
So comes a woman to her eventide."

CLIV

Love's Tears

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 145)

FADE not, I charge you, garlands mine,
Which do these silent doorways crown.
Sweet roses, neither droop nor pine,
Nor shake your dreaming petals down,
Besprinkled with the tears that rise
Unbidden in expectant eyes.

But when the doors at last unclose,
And you behold his smiling face,
Then spill your treasure, faithful rose,
Ere he be clasped in my embrace :—
So shall my garnered tears be shed
About that gay and golden head.

CLV

Truant Love

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 177)

LOVE'S a truant ; he is fled
  Like a bird ; at dawn of day
He awoke and left his bed,
  Spread his wings and flew away.

'Tis a child of April tears,
  Ever chattering, quick to guile,
Unabashed by threats or fears,
  With a sly enticing smile.

Very swift his wings to ply,
  Very deft to aim his darts,
Every man's his enemy,
  Everywhere he pierces hearts.

Who begat him ? Make reply,
  Gods in Heaven, and men on Earth !
Heaven and Earth and Sea deny
  That they gave the rascal birth.

He may hide him anywhere.
  Ha, the caitiff I surprise ;
See, he hovers round his lair,
  Peeping from a maiden's eyes.

CLVI

Moeris Kissed Me

(Strato, 2nd cent. A.D., A. xii. 177)

DID it happen as it seemed ?
Was it only that I dreamed ?
At the fading of the light
When true lovers say good night,
Moeris kissed me !
Was it so ?
Yet I know, or seem to know,
While the happy moments fled,
All she asked me, all she said.
Yet I wonder ! If in truth
Moeris kissed me, then forsooth
I'm in Heaven ; and how, or when
Can I tread the earth again ?

CLVII

The Bee's Sting

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 163)

FLOWER-LOVING bee, why, thy honey-bells forgetting,
Dost thou wound the hand of the maid I love the best ?
Wouldst thou show that love, the tender spirit fretting,
Hoards a sweetness still within the stricken breast ?
This is then the secret that thou tellest ! even so !
I and my beloved knew the secret long ago.

CLVIII

The Gnat

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 152)

FLY, little gnat ; there's a message to take ;
Whisper a word in Zenophila's ear.
Say that I wait for her, bid her awake ;
How can she sleep, when her lover is here ?
Fly to her, fly ; for her lover is nigh,
Ere the first rays thro' the lattices peep ;
Only speak low, lest her sister should know ;
Love may awaken ;—let jealousy sleep !
If you persuade her, no thanks will I spare,
You may be sure I'll repay you for that !
Give you the hide of a lion to wear,
And the club of a Hercules ; fly, little gnat !

CLIX

Love's Panoply

(Marianus, 6th cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 201)

"LOVE, thy panoply is strange!
Where is now thy bended bow,
Where the arrowy darts that range
As thou willest, high or low?

"Where the wings that fanned desire,
Where the torch of vengeful flame,
Kindled at the kindling pyre?—
Thee I know not, nor thy name.

"Thou art crowned with flashing gems,
Like the Lord of spacious lands;
Whence these triple diadems
That thou bearest in thine hands?"

"Ay, I am not what I seem;
Not the heedless Paphian boy,
Born of some ecstatic dream,
Offspring of desire and joy.

" Nay, I light a purer flame,
Heavenward lift the aspiring soul.
Men my threefold gifts may claim,
Freedom, Courage, Self-control.

" Ye may win them—ask not how—
Gain the diadems divine ;
But the crown that girds my brow
Love and Service made it mine."

CLX

Love and Sleep

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 174)

TENDER heart, thou sleepest ; and my care begins
Thus to see thee lying ;
Sleep brooks no denying,
Sleep regards no rival, when he woos and wins.

Sleep can hold the eyes of Zeus upon his throne :
If he had not found thee,
And in slumber bound thee,
I myself had held thee, I myself alone.

CLXI

Hoarded Beauty

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 85)

THOU dost hoard thy loveliness ;
What avails it, more or less ?
In this pleasant world above
There is laughter, there is love ;
In the dumb and dark Hereafter,
There is neither love nor laughter.
Thou and I, to darkness thrust,
Moulder into bones and dust.

CLXII

Love Bound

(Maecius, 2nd cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 198)

WEEP, wanton boy, thy hands are tied,
Thou canst not rend the bonds in twain ;
Thy turn to suffer ! 'tis my pride
To see thee in thine hour of pain.

Soul-scorner, bane of womanhood,
Beguiler of deluded youth,
Robber of reason—oh, 'tis good
To tell thee all the bitter truth !

Thy bonds—they set the whole world free ;
Thy grief—it doth revive our joy.
Pray if thou wilt ; the winds in glee
Mock thy entreaties, graceless boy !

Thy torch that fired so many a heart,
Yes, watch it, for its end it nears ;
Soon shall the flickering flame depart,
Quenched by my laughter and thy tears.

CLXIII

The Pledge

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 261)

I LOVE not wine ;—but wouldst thou make
Me less than sober, I will take
The goblet that hath touched thy lip,
And drink to sweet companionship ;
For if thou taste it first, then I
Must drain the brimming beaker dry,
And yield my sober senses up
To that fair hand that bears the cup.
Thy lips have kissed the goblet ; see,
It keeps the kiss that waits for me,
And whispers, ere the draught be done,
Of all the sweetness it hath won.

CLXIV

On a Picture of a Girl Singing

(Paulus Silentiarius, 6th cent. A.D., Ap. Pl. 277)

ART can no more ; and thou dost still
Defy the painter's baffled skill !
And even thus, could art surprise
The sweetness of thy dreaming eyes,
Who could recapture or prolong
The thrill of thy ecstatic song ?
When eye and ear alike were bent
On thee in silent wonderment ;
When thou to thy accordant lyre
Didst breathe thy soul in words of fire.

CLXV

The Flower-Girl

(Dionysius, 2nd cent. B.C., A. v. 81)

PRETTY maid, you are fair as the roses you bear ;
Come tell me, what is it you sell ?
Your kisses, your posies, yourself or your roses,
Or yourself and your roses as well ?

CLXVI

The Loving-Cup

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 136)

BRIM the goblet, and acclaim
Twice and thrice my lady's name ;
Let the name of names resound,
While the loving-cup goes round.
Wreathe my head with roses ; say,
Roses, was it yesterday
Ye beheld her ? Twined for her
Was this garland, spiced with myrrh ;
And for her belovèd sake
Thus remembrance will I make.
Roses, spill a silent tear ;
'Tis to-day ; and she not here !

CLXVII

My Lady's Lute

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 139)

OBEDIENT to my lady's touch
Her lute delights the charmèd air.
"Sweet," said I? Nay, 'tis overmuch,
More sweet than lover's heart can bear!
I fain would flee; but cravings wild,
Quick-coming fancies throng my breast;
They leave the strife unreconciled,
And will not let my spirit rest.
Thy music or thy loveliness?—
I know not whence the yearning came—
Thy silence?—nay, I cannot guess;
I only know my soul's aflame.

CLXVIII

Taedium Vitae

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. xii. 46)

I AM but one-and-twenty,
And yet I'm tired, tired!
Of life I have had plenty,
And more than I desired.
O life and love, so full of woe,
Why do ye mock and vex me so?

Fie on ye, Loves! What matter
Tho' I lie bleeding, bleeding?
You'll toss your dice, and chatter,
Nought sparing and nought heeding.
O life and love, so full of woe,
Why do ye mock and vex me so?

CLXIX

Fire and Water

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 176)

"LOVE'S a fearful thing," say I.
What avails it, if I sing
To a mournful melody,
Crying, "Love's a fearful thing"?

Love's a rogue; he thrives on blame;
See, he laughs with knavish pride!
And the more I cry, "For shame!"
He's the better satisfied.

Thou, his mother—thou didst rise
Meekly through the waters wild;—
How could those wet waves devise
Such a burning fiery child?

CLXX

Artificers

(Rufinus, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 15)

WHERE is now Praxiteles ?
Where are Polycleitus' hands ?
Touched by craftsmen deft as these,
Marble quickens where it stands.

Who shall Melite portray,
Kindling eyes and fragrant hair,
Slender throat and laughter gay
Lingering on the charmèd air ?

Hasten, craftsmen ; labour well !
Such a maid deserves her shrine ;
Gods that deign on earth to dwell
Make their dwelling-place divine.

CLXXI

Hesiod and Pyrrha

(Marcus Argentarius, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 161)

WHEN Pyrrha looked in, with a smile on her face,
I was reading my Hesiod—I'd just found the place—
And really enjoying it too!
So I threw down the book, and I shouted for joy,—
"Old Hesiod, clear out; you're a tiresome old boy;
I have better employment than you!"

CLXXII

But Remember

(Strato, 2nd cent. A.D., A. xii. 234)

WELL, if thou wilt, disdainful maid,
In form and feature put thy trust !
Yet mark how roses, when they fade,
Are gathered to the common dust !

For fate allots to face and flower
Alike the sunshine and the shade ;
And envious time appoints an hour
For each to flourish, each to fade.

CLXXIII

Love Grows by Scorn

(Paulus Silentiarius, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 256)

GALATEA, last night, slammed the door in my face,
And added a word, which completes my disgrace ;—
" Love is slain by derision,"—the proverb's absurd !
By the scorn of a sweetheart men's passions are stirred !
I said I would stay a full twelvemonth away ;
And here I am calling the very next day !

CLXXIV

Love's Victim

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. xii. 132)

OH, heavy-laden soul, now dost thou burn
A shuddering victim in the fires of death ;
Till desperate with anguish, thou dost turn
From those fierce torments, and again draw breath.
Forbear to weep ! Love pities not, nor spares ;
Thou didst unbar the door and draw him in
To warmth and merriment, and unawares
Feed and caress that stealthy bosom-sin.
Thou didst not know thy peril ? Oh, for shame !
Thy foster-child repays thee, woe on woe :
To search thy heart he sends the raging flame,
To freeze thy bones he sheds the aching snow.
So wouldst thou have it ; 'tis a sequel meet ;
Know now the pain of satisfied desire !
For those delights, than honeycomb more sweet,
Turn in a moment to consuming fire.

CLXXV

I Yield, I Yield

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. xii. 48)

YES, I yield ; I bite the dust ;
Set thy foot upon me !
Sharp the stroke, and sore the thrust,
Thou hast soon undone me !
Every arrow from thy bow
Breaks in fiery flashes ;
Kindle hearts ! But even thou
Canst not kindle ashes.

CLXXVI

Love's Fears

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. xii. 147)

SHE is reft from me—what heart of stone
So obdurate a deed hath done ?
'Gainst Love to raise a spoiling hand !
Quick, kindle torches ! I command
Ye follow her, where'er she be . . .
A light foot falls—'tis none but she !
Back to thy post, my faithless heart,
Traitor and craven both thou art !

CLXXVII

A Message from the Sea

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. xii. 53)

SEA-FARING ships, with corded bales,
That feel the North wind in your sails,
And issue forth from Helle's sound
To isles of the Aegean bound,
If on the shores of Cos there be
A maiden gazing out to sea,
Then, gallant ships, I pray you, say
That her fond lover's on his way ;
No sailor he, but all afire
With love and worship and desire,
Her passionate pilgrim ; oh, be kind,
And Zeus will bless you ; ye shall find
Safe passage and a favouring gale,
To fill your onward-speeding sail.

CLXXVIII

The Vine-Arbour

(Mnasalcas, 4th cent. B.C., A. xii. 138)

VINE, that wouldst thy leafage shed,
Why so hasty? Dost thou dread
To be seen in all thy pride
By the stars at eventide?
Wait awhile; thy vigil keep,
Till my wayward darling sleep
Here beneath thee; waken thou!
Bid thy tendrils wreathe her brow,
And her snow-white cheek caress,
Adding grace to loveliness.

CLXXIX

Till Death us do Part

(Paulus Silentiarius, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 241)

AH, woe is me! How oft I strove
To say farewell to Thee and Love;—
Yet sick at heart I thrust away
The fatal words I dare not say;
Back from the hapless fight I flee,
And hasten home to Love and Thee.
For see, if thou and I should part,
'Twould overwhelm my aching heart
In darkness drear and infinite,
And silent as the nether night.
Thou art my daystar, and my day.
And yet, methinks, the heavenly ray
Is dumb and silent, saith no word!
But thou beside me, softly heard,
Dost murmur like some brook in Spring,
Sweet as the song the Sirens sing.
My dreams, my hopes, whate'er they be,
Have thee for goal, and only thee.

CLXXX

The Forlorn Lover

(Agathias, 6th cent. A.D., A. v. 237)

ALL night I sigh ; and when the day
Grants me a niggard boon of sleep,
The twittering swallows chase away
My slumbers, and I wake to weep.
In fevered vigil as I lie,
Rhodanthe's myriad charms I tell ;
Hush, hush, ye chatterers ! 'Twas not I
Who shore the tongue of Philomel.[1]
Here be your tedious grief repressed ;
Mourn Itylus, if so ye will,
Beside the hoopoe's rocky nest,
Amid the silence of the hill !
Hence with you to your mountain home,
There raise your clamorous alarms !
And then perchance a dream will come
And clasp me in Rhodanthe's arms.

[1] Philomela and Procne were the daughters of Pandion, King of Attica. Procne became the wife of Tereus, King of Daulis, and bore a son Itylus. Tereus, enamoured of Philomela, concealed Procne in a remote fastness, and wooed Philomela, whom he deprived of her tongue. Procne in revenge killed Itylus, and the two sisters were changed, Procne into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale.

CLXXXI

Unchanging Love

(Strato, 2nd cent. A.D., A. xii. 248)

HOW should true Lovers know
That love doth wither,
When through sweet days they go
Alway together ?
To-morrow seemeth still
To-day returning,
They in their linkèd will
No change discerning !

CLXXXII

The Pursuit

(Marcus Argentarius, 1st cent. A.D., A. v. 16)

GOLDEN moon with hornèd tip,
Dost thou then so soon forget,
And ye shining stars that slip
Into ocean's bosom wet ?
She, as sweet as Orient spice,
But as wintry winds unkind,
Flies me, and by no device
I the wandering witch can find.
I will set the silver hound
Of Persuasion on her track ;
Seek my darling, till she's found :
Find her, yes ; but bring her back ?

CLXXXIII

Not so Unkind

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 23)

COLD the wind, and cold the snow
Drifting down the portico;
O Conopion, canst thou sleep,
While such chilly watch I keep?
I would wish thee sleep as sound
As I find on the cold ground.
Even tyrant hearts, meseems,
Are not cruel in their dreams;
Pity, though thou canst not see;
Ev'n thy neighbour pities me!
When thy hair is white as snow,
Then, forgotten, thou shalt know,
Know how cold is solitude,
When thou wooest and art not wooed.

CLXXXIV

Rosa Rosarum

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 144)

NOW blooms the first white violet;
Narcissus blooms, who loves the shade;
The sleeping lily wakens, wet
With dewdrops, in the mountain-glade.

But into lovelier blossom breaks
The Rose herself, the world's desire;
And in her eyes the dream awakes
That quickens every pulse to fire.

Of azure orb and crimson star
Why vaunt your treasures, idle fields?
Zenophila is sweeter far
Than all the sweets the springtime yields.

CLXXXV

Lais

(Secundus, 1st cent. A.D., A. ix. 260)

I PIERCED the hearts of many lovers,
But now my own pierced heart discovers
The solitary doom of one
Who lived for love and love alone—

Hear, Aphrodite—'tis a name
To swear by, not a living flame—
My fame, my fortune is o'erthrown,
And Lais to herself unknown.

CLXXXVI

The Mirror

(Plato, 4th cent. B.C., A. vi. 1)

LAIS, I who far and wide
Did the wondering world deride,
Lais, at whose lightest word
Lovers flocked, a wanton herd,
Here beside the temple-gate,
This last gift I dedicate ;
'Tis my mirror ; it hath seen
Not what is, but what hath been.
What I was I cannot see ;
What I am I would not be.

CLXXXVII

Yea, Thou Knowest

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 64)

CAST forth Thy snows, Thine icy sleet,
Let lightnings flash, let thunders roll,
Ride forth on darkling clouds, to meet
And overwhelm my dauntless soul.

Then will I cease, and not till then!
And if Thou giv'st me leave to live,
A man among my fellow-men,
I'll take whatever Love may give.

For Thou and I are one in this—
We both desire and both obey;
And Thou didst take, to gain Thy kiss,
Through brazen doors Thy golden way.

1 Zeus made his way to Danae, whom he loved, in her guarded tower, as a shower of gold.

CLXXXVIII

Love's Epitaph

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. v. 215)

TAKE, O Love, a lover's part !
Soothe my sleepless longing ;
All thine arrows pierce my heart ;
I am wronged, not wronging !
Though thou slay me, though thou laugh
Insolent, unheeding,
I will write my epitaph,—
" Lo, where Love lies bleeding ! "

CLXXXIX

Love is Best

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. v. 169)

SWEET to the summer-parchèd lip
The dewy ice-cold draught to sip,
And sweet the airs of springtime are
To sailors who have wandered far.

But sweeter yet, in wintry weather
When two fond lovers sit together,
One cloak to shield them ; cheek by cheek,
They learn to listen, learn to speak.

CXC

Alexis

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. xii. 127)

OH, but I saw him, fresh and fair
And heedless in the noonday heat,
Alexis !—when the summer air
Made ripe the heavy-headed wheat.

How sweet and shy the wilful eyes
That for a moment dwelt on mine ;
Not all the splendour of the skies
Could match their loveliness divine !

The night her dewy fingers laid
On earth's hot brow, and bade her rest.
But those remembered glances made
A fiercer fire within my breast ;

When sleep on toilworn eyes was poured,
To me alone no respite came ;
I slept ; but in my dreams adored
Those kindling eyes, that living flame.

CXCI

My Star

(Plato, 4th cent. B.C., A. vii. 669)

I WATCH thee gazing, O my star,
Upon the starry skies afar ;
Ah, would that I the heaven might be,
To gaze with myriad eyes on thee !

CXCII

Cleonicus

(Rhianus, 2nd cent. B.C., A. xii. 121)

AS down the path the stripling sped,
The Graces caught him in their arms,
And lavished on his curly head
Their whole enchanting store of charms.

Hail, Cleonicus, and farewell!
See, from afar I call your name;
These dry old stalks of asphodel
Must not be set too near the flame.

CXCIII

Love's Dominion

(Bianor, 1st cent. A.D., A. xi. 364)

STRANGE mystery of life and fate!
This humble slave, of low estate,
Is loved; the bondsman doth control
The impulse of another's soul.

CXCIV

The Sovereign Cure

(Archilochus, 7th cent. B.C., Fr 9, Bergk)

THE man that grieves o'er divers woes
To wine and laughter may not fall ;
The city that doth serve her foes
Hath no delight in festival.
The ravenous deep hath slain our best ;
Unburied and unknown they lie.
We mourn them, and our labouring breast
Hath now no language but a sigh.
Yet God hath taught us to endure
The ills that dare not seek relief :
Take courage ; 'tis the sovereign cure,
The remedy for noble grief.
Now here, now there His strokes astound
Our senses ; 'tis our turn to-day
To suffer ; ah, the gaping wound,
That drains our hearts' best blood away.
Grief passes ; and the world is wide ;
The pain departs, we know not when ;
Stay not to wonder ; thrust aside
The fears that make us less than men.

CXCV

Erinna [1]

(Unknown, A. vii. 12)

'TWAS spring with thee, and borne along
Upon the honied tide of song,
Thou didst delight the listening skies
With wealth of new-born melodies ;
And from thy maiden lips didst fling
Such notes as swans at nightfall sing.
Ah me ! 'twas thus that fate, who shears
The slender thread of mortal years,
Drove thee to seek the realms that brood
In darkness, o'er the sundering flood.
Yet still the songs thou madest then
Find echo in the hearts of men ;
Oh no, thou art not dead ; the Muse
Thy glory and thy grace renews ;
And thou with worship and desire
Art numbered with the heavenly choir.

[1] Erinna of Rhodes was a contemporary of Sappho (7th cent. B.C.) and died very young.

CXCVI

Facilis Descensus

(Unknown, A. x. 3)

WHETHER thou at Athens be,
Or in distant Meroe,
When thou yieldest up thy breath,
Straight is the descent to Death.
Grieve not then that thou hast come
To thine end so far from home!
Many are the winds that blow
Over Ocean, to and fro;
One alone, the wise word saith,
Knows the nearest way to Death.

CXCVII

Gratia Vivax

(Posidippus, 3rd cent. B.C., Athenaeus xiii. 596 B.)

DORICHA, thy bones are dust,
Long ago to darkness thrust,
With the knot that bound thy hair
And the robe of perfume rare ;
Robe that wrapt thy lover round
When the bowl with wine was crowned ;
Thou beside him, face to face,
Clasped and locked in his embrace,—
Till the dawn that filled the sky
Made an end of revelry.

But the song that Sappho made
Shall not let thy memory fade ;
This shall praise thee, this enshrine
All the love that once was thine.
See, the white and dainty page
Knoweth neither soil nor age ;
Naucratis[1] shall guard the song,
While the tall ships, all day long,
Through the shallows, mile by mile,
Thread the overbrimming Nile.

[1] A sea-port town in Egypt.

CXCVIII

Whence and Whither

(Macedonius, 6th cent. A.D., A. vii. 566)

GODDESS of life, Thou who didst mould me man ;
And kindly Earth, who shalt my dust receive,
Hail and Farewell ! Even now my little span
Of days is finished, and the course I leave.
Yet whose I am I know not, nor can name
The goal I seek, the road by which I came.

CXCIX

Dion

(Plato, 4th cent. B.C., A. vii. 99)

FOR all the Trojan womankind,
For Hecuba, that ancient queen,
Stern fate a doom of tears designed,
A doom of sorrows unforeseen.

But Dion, thou whose honoured head
From glory unto glory came,
The gods upon thy coming shed
Large hopes, and more than mortal fame.

Sleep in the realm that thou hast blest,
Thy people's pride, their heart's desire ;
Ay, thy renown, made manifest,
Hath set my very soul on fire.

CC

A Grave by the Sea

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 277)

WOULDST know who laid me where I lie?
'Twas good Leontichus; he found
Prone on the sand what once was I,
And hid my bones in alien ground.

He mused upon his cheerless lot,
And wept, the while he made my grave,
That he must wander, resting not,
Like gulls that flit from wave to wave.

CCI

A Sailor's Tomb

(Unknown, A. vii. 350)

SAILOR, enquire not whose this tomb may be,
But sail unharmed upon a kindlier sea.

CCII

My Comrade

(Unknown, A. vii. 346)

OLD friend and comrade true,
It tells, this little stone,
The love betwixt us two ;—
And now I sit alone.

Through that dim land of dreams
A healing river flows ;
And souls who drink its streams
Forget their sharpest woes.

Have patience ; drink not yet !
I follow on, through pain,
And silence, and regret,
To find thee once again.

CCIII

The Joyful Wisdom

(Theaetetus, 3rd cent. B.C., quoted by Diog. Laert. iv. 25)

DEAR to men was Crantor here,
To the Muses doubly dear ;
Dearest to the sons of song,
Yet he lived not overlong.
Earth, who dost so close enfold
Hearts in silence dark and cold,
Say, hath Crantor quite forgot
All the gladness of his lot?
Nay, wherever Crantor be,
There is mirth and minstrelsy !

CCIV

To Be or Not To Be

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 471)

HE bade the light of day farewell,—
Cleombrotus, Ambracia's pride ;—
Then from a high wall leaping fell,
And falling died.
Of evil he had none to note ;
No sin had marred his calm control ;
He had but read what Plato wrote
About the soul.

CCV

A Child's Grave

(Lucian, 2nd cent. A.D., A. vii. 308)

FIVE years I lived, and knew no grief ;—
What need of tears for such as those ?
For if my span of life was brief,
Small was my share of all its woes.

CCVI

By the Spring

(Nicias, 3rd cent. B.C., A. ix. 315)

REST, traveller, if thou art weary ; and if thou art thirsty, drink
Of the waters that flow by the poplar, unceasing and undefiled ;
And sometimes, far on thy journey hence, of the fountain think
That Simus set by the grave of Gillus, his own dear child.

CCVII

Far from Home

(Simonides, 5th cent. B.C., A. vii. 510)

THY body lies in alien earth,
Not in the soil that gave thee birth ;
Amid the foam of Euxine seas
Death sought and found thee, Cleisthenes.

How oft across the homeless main
Thy heart turned homewards, turned again.
Alas, that thou didst never see
The seagirt isle that nurtured thee !

CCVIII

The Worth of Sorrow

(Philetas, 4th cent. B.C., Stobaeus, Flor. cxxiv. 616)

I DARE not mourn thee, dearest friend ;
Thy cares, thy labours have an end ;
God made thee kind and true :
Thou didst desire the better part ;
And so He gave, to guide thy heart,
Thy share of sorrow too !

CCIX

A Slave's Tomb

(Dioscorides, 2nd cent. B.C., A. vii. 178)

WHEN thou wert yet a wilful boy,
I tended thee—'twas all my joy!
And now, a Lydian, ay, a slave,
I rest within a free man's grave.

Live long, be happy, master dear!
Forget not; I await thee here;
No dearer task than this I crave,—
To serve thee still beyond the grave.

CCX

Pulvis et Umbra

(Asclepiades, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 284)

NAY, come no nearer, thou rude sea,
Where hapless Eumares doth lie ;
A stone's-throw westward thou art free
To toss thy foaming billows high.

Why, if thou dost my tomb despoil,
And rend apart the shielding stones,
'Tis nothing worth thy frenzied toil ;—
A little heap of mouldering bones !

CCXI

Soon Forgotten

(Paulus Silentiarius, 6th cent. A.D., A. vii. 307)

"MY name"—"Oh, never mind your name!"
"My country"—"No one wants to know."
"Descent from noble stock I claim."
"Who cares if it was high or low?"

"Nobly I lived, and knew no fear,
And here I lie"—"What does it matter?
Why, no one has the least idea
Or who you were, or why you chatter!"

CCXII

De Coelo Tactus

(Diotimus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 173)

ALL day the heavens were black with cloud,
The hills were white with snow ;
At eve the cattle, lowing loud,
Came to the fold below.
Untended came they ; from the skies
Had fall'n the lightning's stroke ;
Therimachus, the herdsman, lies
Beneath the stricken oak.

CCXIII

A Cenotaph

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 273)

WITH headlong onset, swooping steep,
Squalls from high heaven surprised the deep,
And such a gust as nightly raves
When bright Orion breasts the waves ;
The Libyan billows round me roared,
And swept me battling overboard ;
My nameless body, far and wide,
Is rolled and drifted with the tide.
I sleep not here ; this very stone
Gives lying record, worse than none.

CCXIV

Sea-Winds

(Isidorus, 1st cent. A.D., A. vii. 532)

FORTH from my farmstead, bent on gain,
I fared across the Tuscan main,
I, Eteocles, worldly-wise,
To traffic with my merchandise ;
Alas, a tempest round us broke,
Which did with oft-repeated stroke
So maim us, that in midmost sea
We sank and perished utterly.
The gentle breeze that rustles o'er
The cornland and the threshing-floor,
Hath little kinship with the gale
That smites and rends the labouring sail !

CCXV

Aristocrates

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 440)

I MOURN that on so fair a head
The dust of ages should be shed!
Oh, born to vanquish, born to please,
Where art thou, Aristocrates?—
The man whom praise of men approved,
And by the Muses best beloved,
Who didst delight the listening throng
With jest and argument and song;
Though high the contest, sharp the wit,
No frown upon thy forehead lit;
But thou with smiling grace couldst steer
The eager talk through flowing cheer;
Whose heart no kindness e'er denied;—
Alas, another should have died!
And yet the enfolding earth is blest
That in her arms thine ashes rest.

CCXVI

The Castaway

(Crinagoras, 1st cent. B.C., A. vii. 636)

BLEST is the shepherd's life ; all day to lead
His homely flock among the pastures high ;
The rams pace first across the grassy mead ;
A moment—and the ewes go bleating by.
But ah, the difference ! Other task was mine,
Toss'd on the billows, ceaselessly to dip
And whirl the rudder in the heaving brine,
To guide secure the storm-belaboured ship.
Yet worse befell ; flung headlong overboard,
I sank, and battled with the bitter wave ;
Then knew no more ; the wind that landward roared
Here flung my corpse ; I had no other grave.

CCXVII

The Last Prayer

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. vii. 476)

HELIODORA, canst thou see
How my tears unceasing fall,
All that I can give thee, all
That is left for Love and thee?

Tears of sorrow; let them prove
What the heart that loves thee yet
Holds of passionate regret,
Mute memorial of our love.

Dost thou wonder, all alone
By the penitential streams?
Canst thou, in the place of dreams,
Hear thy lover making moan?

Ravished is my heart's delight.
Ah! the piteous blossom, thrust
To defilement in the dust,
In the darkness, out of sight.

Let my prayer thy pity move,
Mother of our myriad race,
Clasp her close in thy embrace,
Take her to thy heart of love.

CCXVIII

The Bride of Death

(Meleager, 1st cent. B.C., A. vii. 182)

POOR child, were these thy spousals then,
When that dark Power, abhorred of men,
Laid cruel hands on thee ?
The doors were clashed to greet the bride,
The flutes sang shrill at eventide,
In their sweet minstrelsy.

But in the dawn we made lament ;
And Hymen hushed his song, and blent
With ours his mournful breath ;
And all along the road we came,
The funeral torches spouted flame,
To light thy way to death.

CCXIX

Amyntichus

(Unknown, A. vii. 321)

EARTH mother, let thy servant rest ;
Amyntichus hath earned release ;
Receive him in thy kindly breast
To sleep in peace.

Here let him lie in fruitful soil,
By sunlight blest and genial air ;
Remembering all his faithful toil,
His daily care.

With olives choice he did adorn
Thy valleys, with dark-clustered vines
Enriched thee, with high-standing corn
In comely lines.

The mountain stream he downward drew,
In channelled trench and watershoot,
So every season had its due
Of herb and fruit.

Weary and old, in hallowed ground
Grant him sweet rest through sunlit hours,
And deck the smiling greensward round
With wealth of flowers.

CCXX

The Last Rites

(Leonidas of Tarentum, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 657)

YE Shepherd-folk, who to and fro
About the mountain-fastness go,
To tend your fleecy sheep,
Prepare the holy, humble rites,
Wherein Persephone delights :—
Here let Clitagoras sleep !

About his tomb the bleating flock ;
The shepherd from the rugged rock
Shall pipe his gentle lay ;
The pilgrim shall despoil yon bowers,
To twine his coronal of flowers,
In the joyful month of May.

One shall constrain the patient ewe
To yield her milk, libation due
To drench the headstone's rim ;
Oh blest requital, sweet and sad ;
Far-off, Clitagoras shall be glad,
If this be wrought for him.

CCXXI

An Actor .

(Unknown, A. vii. 155)

I WAS Philistion, whose gentle guile
Could once constrain the saddest eyes to smile ;
All joys, all fears that hold the human heart
I could recapture with my peerless art ;
Oft have I died, a different death each day,
But never in so commonplace a way !

CCXXII

A Soldier's Grave

(Anacreon, 6th cent. B.C., A. vii. 160)

THE gallant good Timocritus lies here ;
He had not died, if he had learned to fear :
In valiant fight he fell ; 'tis ever so ;
War smites the brave, and lets the caitiff go.

CCXXIII

Vir Pietate Gravis

(Dionysius, 2nd cent. B.C., A. vii. 78)

'TWAS tranquil Age, not anguish of disease,
That quench'd thy spirit, Eratosthenes.
High thoughts were thine ; so didst thou gently fall
Upon the slumber that awaiteth all.
Nor did Cyrene, who had given thee birth,
Recall thine ashes to thy native earth.
On Proteus' strand men made a tomb for thee ;
Here is the headland ; yonder is the sea.

CCXXIV

The Misanthrope

(Rhianus, 2nd cent. B.C., A. vii. 315)

HIDE me, O thou barren waste,
Let my tomb lie all forlorn ;
By thy roughest briars enlaced,
Overgrown by gnarlèd thorn.

Let no merry bird of spring
Perch light-footed overhead ;
Leave me quiet, slumbering
In my solitary bed.

Timon, hating human-kind,
Hated by my fellows,—I,
To my lonely tomb confined,
Shall not crave for company.

CCXXV

Timon

(Hegesippus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 320)

TRAVELLER, pass by ; this sullen ground
Bears nought but thorns and thistles tough ;
Here Timon lies, who lived, and found
One life enough.

Nay, come no nearer ; cry " For shame,"
And mutter, till thy lips be dry ;
Deride me and my hateful name ;—
Only pass by !

CCXXVI

The Skull

(Crinagoras, 1st cent. B.C., A. ix. 439)

GRIM relic of the unburied dead,
Frail shelter of the scheming brain,
Dark are the porches of thine head,
The tongueless jawbones gape in vain.

The curls that waved above thy brow
Are fall'n ; the eager eyes are dust.
Yea, thou art deaf and silent now,
Not as thou wilt, but as thou must.

Oh, ruinous fortress of the soul,
Here by the roadway thou dost lie,
And in thy patience, takest toll
Of tears from every passer-by.

In vain we flee from toil and strife ;
In vain we make the earth our home ;
What use to hoard the guarded life,
If 'tis to this that all must come ?

CCXXVII

Untimely Death

(Unknown, Kaibel, 373)

'TIS God's decree that all must die ;
For this I dare not grieve ;
But ah ! how sweet the memory
Of all I feared to leave !

A boy's desire, a boy's delight ;—
All this my Fate denied ;
I did not hear the solemn rite,
Nor clasp my laughing bride.

Yet, ere I breathed my latest breath,
My trembling heart approved ;
Men loved me living ; but in death
I shall be more beloved.

CCXXVIII

The Nether World

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 524)

"DOTH Charidas here lie?" "Ay, he lies here,
Cyrenian Charidas, Arimmas' son."
"What of the world beneath?" "'Tis dark and drear."
"And exit upward?" "Exit there is none."
"Pluto?" "A myth! We perish, each alone."[1]

[1] Two lines, probably a humorous addition at the end, omitted.

CCXXIX

Unquiet Death

(Archias, 2nd cent. A.D., A. vii. 278)

I, HAPLESS Theris, whom the West wind bore
A weltering corpse, and flung upon the shore,
Weary and fain of slumber though I be,
Must list the beating of the sleepless sea.
By strangers' hands I to my tomb consigned
There, where the reef is lashed by wave and wind,
Hear, as I lie among the silent dead,
The surges boom and buffet overhead.

CCXXX

Nicanor

(Antipater of Thessalonica, 1st cent. B.C., A. vii. 286)

NICANOR, thou wert doomed to die
O'erwhelmed, where yonder sullen sky
Bestrides the sullen wave.
Naked, thou driftest with the tide
On rock-strewn coasts, and art denied
The solace of the grave.

How changed is all thy goodly state!
Thy palace, dark and desolate,
Awaits its absent lord.
Not all thy hoarded treasures then,
Not honour, not the praise of men,
Could any help afford.

Though high thy prowess, great thy pride,
The fish, that roam the waters wide,
Shall have their will of thee.
None may thine obsequies attend,
And all thy labours have an end
Beneath the hungry sea.

CCXXXI

Father and Son

(Bianor, 1st cent. A.D., A. vii. 671)

DEATH, thou claim'st my darling boy ;
Wouldst thou show me that my joy
Ne'er was mine ?
Oh, thou art insatiate !
Dying early, dying late,
All are thine.

CCXXXII

Atthis

(Unknown, Kaibel, 204, B.)

ATTHIS, best-belovèd wife,
Dear to me as nought beside ;—
Darkened was the light of life
On the day when Atthis died.

Thou for me didst live ; to me
Didst bequeath thy latest breath ;
Mine the sundered life ; for thee
Waits the solitude of death.

Night by night, till darkness fled,
Softly breathing, didst thou rest
Through the long still hours, thy head
Pillowed on thy husband's breast.

Perished now my heart's delight ;—
Sweetest comrade, truest friend,
Thou descendest into night,
And with thee my hopes descend.

CCXXXIII

Crethis

(Callimachus, 3rd cent. B.C., A. vii. 459)

CRETHIS was a Samian maid,
Sweet work-fellow, comrade true ;
Many merry games she played,
Many merry tales she knew.

" Where is Crethis ? " now we say ;—
Samian maidens, silence keep !
Silent now and tired of play,
Crethis sleeps where all must sleep.

A SONG'S a momentary spell
Of ecstasy made audible ;
A deep content that overheard
Thrills into music, measure, word.

And yet a song is as a screen
For saddest thoughts that brood unseen,
And must melodious utterance make,
Or else the burdened heart shall break.

They glance, they greet us, now as then,
Not shadowy names but living men ;
Their leaping joys, their lurking fears
Link hands with ours across the years.

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